

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

MINUTES OF THE PROFICIENCY TESTING PROGRAM COMMITTEE MEETING
AUGUST 4, 2025, 2:15 P.M. CT

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dancia Wu (IN)	Darrell Clinton (IN)	Michele Swarbrick (MN)
Rebecca Moseley (Chair/AL)	Teresa Rygiel (Chair/FL)	Brenda Snodgrass (AAFCO)
Nancy Thiex (AAFCO Life)	Tai Ha (NE)	Naomi High (NC)
Ametra Berry (GA)	Josh Arbaugh (WV)	
Brenda Snodgrass (PT Program Manager / Life Member)		

ADVISORS PRESENT:

Ken Riter (PFI NPAL)	Leo Schilling (Eurofins)
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VIRTUAL ATTENDEES:

Andy Crawford (AAFCO)	Mo Kieffer (Able Labs)	Alexa Bombich (AAFCO)
Denise Mittelstaedt (NM)	Gail Swinford (FDA)	Melissa Nichols (MO)
Lars Reimann (Advisor/ Eurofins)		

OTHERS PRESENT:

Zachary Kuhl (WV)
Solomon Kariuki (U of KY)
Kimberly Roewe (Phibro Animal Health)
Kari Nichols (Eurofins)
Stephanie Peterson (Midwest Labs)
Brian Pickerill (Midwest Labs)
Michelle Sandau (Post Consumer Brands)
Mariah Padton (Charles Feeds)
Madison Smart (NB)
Chad Vietz (NB)
Robin Johnson (MT)
William Hoek (NY)
Brian Schuld (MxNS)
Alicia Hemphill (NC)
Kristen Mintle (Romer Labs)
Jenny Bailie (NutriQuest)
Paul Mignon
Mercedes Thelen (WY)
Erik Pearson (NB)
Dominika Kondratko (CO)
Suzanne Rajewski (IA)
Melanie Banta (IA)
Jason Badgett (IA)
Jeff Horst (Agri-King)
Julie Berry (virtual)
Justin McKenney (NPAL, virtual)
Molly Peters (Tyson Foods, virtual)
Tadas Kargelis (virtual)

Susan Humphries (FDA, virtual)

Bethany Young

Recording Secretary, Minutes Solutions Inc. (virtual)

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 2:15 p.m.

2. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

On a motion made by Brenda Snodgrass and seconded by Michele Swarbrick, it was resolved to approve the agenda for the Proficiency Testing Program Committee meeting as presented. Motion carried.

3. INTRODUCTIONS

All members and guests introduced themselves and completed the sign-in sheet.

4. PROGRAM LEADERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATIVE UPDATES

4.1 Quality Management System Update

Alexa Bombich explained that a rough draft had been sent to Brenda Snodgrass. She stated that they were projected to have the quality system fully updated by the May 2026 deadline. It was noted that the old standard had a specific clause written for preventative action. The 2023 version of the standard mentions risk instead of preventative action. They represent the same concept of mitigating identified risk and developing a corrective action plan. A surveillance desk assessment is expected in December 2025.

4.2 Committee Membership Update

4.2.1 Updated Roster

The updated roster was not discussed.

4.2.2 Basecamp Introduction

Rebecca Moseley shared that AAFCO shifted from SharePoint to Basecamp, which works better for Apple users. All communication going forward will be in Basecamp. Functionalities include email notification of documents added and the ability to chat with the group. It was noted that training tutorials are available. The PTP meeting agendas and minutes have been moved to Basecamp, and community members have been invited to join Basecamp.

5. UPDATE ON JANUARY 2025 ACTION ITEMS

The AAFCO Board voted to keep the PTP Committee and Lab Services Committee separate. The advisors had shared concerns that the PTP committee needed to stay separate because it runs like a business. Maintaining separation would allow Lab Services to focus on lab methods. Rebecca Moseley and Teresa Rygiel expressed appreciation for the input received from attendees that aided the Board in their decision making.

6. 2025 SUBSCRIPTION UPDATE

Brenda Snodgrass presented a four-year program participation comparison chart. She reported that, as of August 2, 2025, enrollments had increased compared to last year (200-220 labs for animal feed, 117-138 for pet food, 42-44 for minerals, 72-78 for mycotoxin), with the largest growth from international labs. Additional subscriptions were also added by labs whose requirements changed and needed to evaluate each chemist under separate scheme subscriptions. She noted that 43 labs signed up to participate in the laboratory sample preparation study, thanks in part to Nancy Thiex's outreach. Brenda provided an update on the budget from FY23 – FY26. The program is strong and bringing revenue into the organization. The program has been accredited since 2016.

Brenda Snodgrass reviewed the updated methods code list that was approved in August 2024. She noted the new 900.xx method codes that were added for those participating in the lab sample study. The codes are being updated as needed and are currently on revision four. The list has been emailed to participating labs and is available on the data-submitting website. When reporting results, participants were reminded to select a test method code and a sample prep code. She noted that aflatoxin should be reported in ppb, not ppm.

7. CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

Brenda Snodgrass reported that the Label Estimated Analysis now includes "Fiber, dietary total" as a result of the push to align labels with those for human food. Attendees from ISO 17025 labs stated that they solicit customer feedback through surveys, both paper and electronic, and record unsolicited feedback that is received. Brenda says survey monkey is not cheap. Josh said FASS can help the PTP with that survey just as they did for the board. The group agreed that very little feedback is received despite repeated outreach efforts, leading them to assume that happy customers do not have much feedback to provide.

8. LABORATORY SAMPLING ROUND ROBIN UPDATE

Nancy Thiex presented the Analyte Summary Report for Round One of the Unground PT Study (Round 1). She provided recommendations to improve the data for Round Two of the study. Participants were advised to verify that units are properly reported, % vs ppm for mineral, report NPN as N, and to review the sampling training course. Denice mentioned a lack of a true control sample. Denice suggested a control ground sample from Mo Kieffer along with the Unground sample be sent out and have the labs test both to better compare the sampling error to the analytical error. Brenda said the reason they didn't send out 1 unground and 1 ground samples was because they already have that analytical data from the PT program.

The group discussed the nature of skewed data results that did not appear to be the result of sampling errors. Andy Crawford stated that the data was not atypical, and the shape of the curve is the key versus the small number of data points. Fiber data was the most concerning, and potential causes such as a lack of rinsing, variable methods to soak or shake samples, grinding process issues, and lack of a blind control sample were discussed. Nancy Thiex acknowledged that fiber analysis is particle size dependent, noting that as more data is received, they will look at particle size versus test data. It was determined that the working group would need to reconvene to review the data from the first and second groups and fine-tune what is needed in the study. Ken Riter noted that, since it was a study and not a true PT program, the working group could contact participants to ask clarifying questions about the data.

9. ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) SOFTWARE DISCUSSION

On a motion made by Josh Arbaugh, it was resolved to form a working group to develop a request for services for statistical analysis work. Motion carried.

The group discussed Austin Therrell's inquiry on the potential use of AI for statistical analysis and whether a statistician would need to be hired when Andy Crawford retires. Brenda Snodgrass stated that European labs were using statistical analysis software but that it is possible that AI software is not interactive with any proficiency testing provider. Ken Riter noted that an expert would be needed to evaluate the output of any software. It was determined that there was a need to hire a statistician for upcoming projects and to provide continuity of operations as Andy Crawford approaches retirement. The working group tasked with creating a job description for a statistician consists of Josh Arbaugh, Ken Riter, Michele Swarbrick, and Teresa Rygiel, Brenda Snodgrass, and Andy Crawford.

10. ANALYTICAL VARIATION (AV) WORKGROUP UPDATE

Josh Arbaugh announced that Sally Flowers is no longer able to participate in the working group. He explained that an official decision has not been reached on releasing the new AV data run by Andy Crawford to the OP. Since most data was similar, the group discussed waiting to release it or to make the changes and add a few additional AVs that were missing. The next step is to seek feedback from industry and regulatory partners to determine if they have any concerns with making the data changes. After the August 2025 meeting, the working group will meet more regularly to determine an official recommendation to bring to the Board. They will also conduct outreach to get feedback on the decision. After the second round of sampling data is obtained, the group will evaluate the data and determine whether it can be used or if additional information is needed to look at the sampling error as they slowly build towards investigational allowance.

Josh Arbaugh noted that the longer-term goal is the bigger challenge of field sampling study information. Ken Riter raised the question of developing a sample study design. Josh Arbaugh suggested that, instead of the AAFCO issuing multiple RFQs, a group of committee members, who are experts in sampling, could develop a proposal that meets the exact needs of what the committee requires. They could then find a way to complete that in-house in a more collaborative way. Josh Arbaugh will follow up with the Board and the Chair of the Inspection and Sampling Committee (ISC).

11. OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 Open Discussion

Josh Arbaugh provided an update on a survey to determine where regulatory labs are with dietary fiber testing. Ten labs reported they could run dietary fiber. He added that the number may be skewed high, since the survey was for the regulatory program. He stated that he was aware of at least five regulatory labs that have started the process to run dietary fiber. He encouraged any labs running dietary fiber on PT samples to report the data so that the committee can start to see what labs are doing with that methodology. More data is needed, and the request has been shared with industry as well.

Josh Arbaugh reported that he and Brenda Snodgrass have access to AVA, the closed-source AI regulatory assistant demonstrated by Richard TenEyck. He instructed committee members to contact them if they had a question they would like to pose to the system. Repeated queries will help determine where there are gaps or other issues. He stated that it is a closed system limited to only the AAFCO site in order to prevent incorrect information, but there will be an opportunity to add specific references in the future. Leo Schilling suggested asking the Board if a process could be developed to request the addition of a resource link to AVA. The resource would then be reviewed to determine if it would be an appropriate addition for AAFCO and the community.

Josh Arbaugh asked what PT provider attendees were using for microbiological feed contaminants. The two providers mentioned were LGC Standards and AOAC. It was noted that LGC is expensive and there have been shipping issues with some packages that are not dangerous being held up in the Memphis distribution center while others that are more concerning seem to go right through. AOAC is also expensive and is for meat products. They do two rounds each year with 12 samples, four for each pathogen.

An attendee asked what prevented the PTP program from being able to offer such a program. The major deterrent was the cost of overnight shipping on ice. The PT samples are shipped at ambient conditions. Brenda Snodgrass shared other factors considered during the original conversations regarding providing microbiological samples. These included how a positive sample containing a microbiological value could be provided, how to get the pathogen into the feed, how to make sure it stays stable, and what type of stability and homogeneity testing would need to be done. It was determined that microbiologicals would not be included in the program. Those who needed microbiologicals went to international sources. Josh Arbaugh suggested that it might be something worth looking at again, since they are expensive for labs. It may not be economical to do, but if there is a way to offer a service that is quality and affordable, it is worth investigating.

Rebecca Moseley asked if there would be a follow-up call or survey sent to participating labs at the end of the lab sampling study to capture their feedback. Brenda Snodgrass indicated that they would email the labs asking for feedback and could schedule a conference call with the labs at the end of the study.

Michelle Swarbrick had a question on the last mineral sample sent out, round 2025-52. She reported that five of the 14 elements had a z-score of 2 and 3. She wondered how a homogeneity test was done on the scheme, since it was so spread out on many of the elements, and whether something was wrong with the sample. For example, cobalt had 15 of 26 fail with a z-score of 3 or 2. Brenda Snodgrass stated that, for the animal feed program, an expert lab is sent 10 bags to see if they can replicate the test result on all 10 bags. However, the minerals program may be different. She stated that she would review the data at the end of the month with Nancy Thiex and report what they find.

12. ADJOURNMENT

On a motion made by Brenda Snodgrass, seconded by Josh Arbaugh and carried, it was agreed that there was no further business to transact; the meeting closed at 4:40 p.m.

DISCLAIMER

The above document 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.