



ANNUAL BROWN COUNTY WEED & PEST BOARD MINUTES

March 12, 2024

**Brown County Courthouse Community Room ~ 25 Market Street,
Aberdeen, SD**

Present: Duane Jark, Tyler Bierman, Dennis Feickert, Drew Dennert, Troy Knecht, Brenda Sievers (Dept. of Ag. and Natural Resources), and Chris Hemen - Weed & Pest Supervisor.

Troy Knecht called the meeting to order, welcomed everyone, and introduced the Weed Board.

The meeting agenda was presented. Owen Elsen made a motion to approve the agenda as presented and David North seconded, motion carried.

The 2023 minutes were presented by Troy Knecht. Tom Stehly made a motion to approve the minutes as presented and Owen Elsen seconded, motion carried.

The new 2024 Weed & Pest Board President/Chairman, Troy Knecht was appointed, and Duane Jark was appointed as the Vice President at the Weed & Pest Board meeting.

Chris Hemen gave the supervisor's report. He presented the fiscal report, inspection summary, and annual reports that he is required to submit to the Dept. of Ag each year. He noted that in the fiscal report, the Weed & Pest Dept. was able to recoup \$95,765.03 in expenses to the budget through private spraying and mosquito control. We used 99.2% of our budget for the year. The county did a wage study last year and wages were increased, hence we went over on what was originally budgeted for wages. However, we were able to cut back on supplies and maintenance costs. He then went over the inspection summary and reported that we saw less wormwood last year, but there was an increase in spurge, thistle, and toadflax. Much of the toadflax we found was along state highways. We spot treated those areas to prevent spreading to the rest of the county. We even found a salt cedar plant that was cut down and stump treated. Lastly, he gave a summary of 2023 activities in the department. It was noted that Brown County Weed and Pest had a much better year in 2023 than they did the previous year. Weather conditions were very favorable for spraying, so we were kept busy all year long with private spraying, mosquito control, and townships. One of our bigger struggles was finding time to do paperwork and maintenance in the shop.

Chris Hemen gave an update on township spraying and application costs for 2024. Thanks to the weather, we were able to treat a few more township ROW's this year. We had a couple townships that had us go out in the spring and the fall, one of which was Cortlandt township in Edmunds County. Doug Fjeldheim asked if a township sprays their ROW and a neighboring township doesn't, is it worth

it for the township to even spray. Hemen stated that any control will help, and some townships will go as far as having both sides of a bordering road sprayed (even though it's not their township) just to give themselves an extra buffer. We also sprayed the Mina lagoon, half of which is in Brown County. There was a lot of toadflax around the lagoon that we were able to treat and hopefully prevent spreading into Brown County.

Hemen also mentioned that the Weed & Pest Board made some changes to the application costs for 2024, as prices haven't been increased in several years and labor fees weren't always covering wages. He reviewed prices for private spraying, mosquito control, government agency pricing, and township spraying. He also stated that our goal is to just keep noxious weeds under control. If a private landowner or township has the means to spray their own ROW, by all means they should go ahead and do that. The county is also available if they would like a consult on how to handle an infestation on their own.

Chris Hemen then introduced the Weed & Pest employees, Jerry Lehrkamp and Mike Rorhbach. They will be returning from the Highway Dept. this spring and we all look forward to getting back to spraying weeds. He encouraged anyone to feel free to ask any questions or report any problem areas to any of the Weed & Pest employees.

Next, he gave a brief update on mosquito control. 2023 started off with many more complaints about mosquitos and flies than usual. We stayed quite busy all year with fogging and misting. We also gave out a lot of larvicide. Hemen advised anyone on a city board to apply for state grants in May. Mayor Vern Prickett of Stratford asked about the chemical we use for fogging and if it can damage plants or if the chemical stays on them. According to the label, there is no residual. Also, it's not water-fast so any dew or rain would wash it off. It's a contact killer that only affects insects that are actively flying when we're fogging. That's why we always go out after sunset when the butterflies and bees are no longer active.

Lastly, Hemen gave an update on the budget for 2024. We are budgeting a little more than last year due to wage increases and to replace our aging data logging system.

Old Business:

None

New Business:

Dennis Feickert gave a quick update on some legislative items currently being discussed in Pierre. One concern was the possible consolidation of counties or the removal of townships since there are a few counties in the state that are in debt.

Tom Stehly made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Howard Anderson, meeting adjourned.

After the meeting, Brenda Sievers from the Department of Ag and Natural Resources gave a presentation on state noxious weeds, locally noxious weeds, and the South Dakota Seed program.

Respectfully yours,



Chris Hemen
Brown County Weed and Pest