

MINUTES  
**SENATE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Tuesday, February 03, 2026

**TIME:** 8:00 A.M.

**PLACE:** Room WW53

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Chairman Nichols, Vice Chairman Zito, Senators Lakey, Lent, VanOrden, Blaylock, Kohl, Semmelroth, and Taylor

**ABSENT/ EXCUSED:** None

**NOTE:** The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

**CONVENED:** **Chairman Nichols** called the meeting of the Senate Agricultural Affairs Committee (Committee) to order at 8:00 a.m.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator VanOrden** moved to approve the Minutes of January 27, 2026. **Senator Taylor** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**PASSED THE GAVEL:** Chairman Nichols passed the gavel to Vice Chairman Zito.

**DOCKET NO. 02-0601-2501** **Rules Governing the Production and Distribution of Seed (ZBR Chapter Rewrite) - Pending Rule.** **Ms. Andrea Thompson**, Administrator of the Plant Industries Division for the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA), explained this rule established requirements for Pure Seed and Germination Standards. An Incorporation by Reference (IBR) standard for germination was added. Noxious and export weed seeds of concern were updated. Rules were removed for Rapeseed and Bluegrass. (Attachment 1).

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Lakey** inquired about the need to utilize the IBR standards. **Ms. Thompson** explained standards were necessary to ensure seed quality met various international export requirements. **Senator Lakey** asked why the IBR did not include a date. **Ms. Thompson** stated the IBR was not dated due to it being a rolling publication; updates were constantly made to keep up with industry export changes. **Mr. Lloyd Knight**, Deputy Director for the ISDA, added that the IBR referred to seed standards. He stated the ISDA served the export industry, where standards changed frequently. Changes occurred through collaboration among the industry, states, and researchers to respond to evolving market demands and concerns, so the agency remained flexible to align with national and international export requirements.

**DOCKET NO. 02-0602-2501** **Rules Governing Registrations and Licenses - Pending Rule.** **Ms. Thompson** Administrator of the Plant Industries Division for the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA), explained this was an annual Incorporated by Reference (IBR) Update. In addition, three subchapters were updated. The updates included refinements to definitions, technical terms, and other standards necessary for state statute regulation.

**DOCKET NO. 02-0606-2501** **Rules Governing the Planting of Beans - Pending Rule.** **Ms. Thompson** Administrator of the Plant Industries Division for the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA), stated the Idaho Bean Commission requested an update to the rule for clarification purposes. The updates clarified planting requirements for edible harvest purposes and confirmed that positive disease detections would be released upon confirmation.

**DOCKET NO. 02-0609-2502** **Rules Governing Invasive Species and Noxious Weeds - Adoption of Temporary Rule.** **Ms. Thompson** Administrator of the Plant Industries Division for the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA), explained the rule removed the previous prohibition of watercraft from the treatment area for quagga mussel on the Snake River from Hansen Bridge to Pillar Falls. Second, golden mussels were added to the Emergency Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) Invasive Species list. The addition of golden mussels to the EDRR list ensured adequate legal authority for prevention and response efforts in Idaho.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Kohl** referred to the quagga mussel outbreak that had occurred over the past few years and asked if the rule was related to this year. **Ms. Thompson** deferred to Mr. Lloyd Knight. **Mr. Lloyd Knight**, Deputy Director of the ISDA, explained that during the past three years of conducting treatments in the Snake River, a previous temporary rule was enacted for the immediate closure of access. **Docket No. 02-0609-2502** proposed reopening limited access to the Snake River while maintaining restrictions in areas still under quarantine.

**DOCKET NO. 02-0609-2503** **Rules Governing Invasive Species and Noxious Weeds - Pending Rule.** **Ms. Thompson** Administrator of the Plant Industries Division for the Idaho State Department of Agriculture (ISDA), explained this Docket in conjunction with **Docket No. 02-0609-2502**.

**PASSED THE GAVEL:** Vice Chairman Zito passed the gavel to Chairman Nichols.

**PRESENTATION: Norway Rat Presentation.** **Mr. Lloyd Knight**, Deputy Director of the ISDA, explored the various invasive and agricultural pests in Idaho and ISDA's control options under the Plant Pest Act and the Invasive Species Act. The Plant Pest Act gave the department broad authority, including use of deficiency warrants, to control pests injurious to agriculture such as the Japanese beetle. Activities including statewide surveys, quarantines, treatments, and reimbursement programs for landowners were discussed. The Japanese beetle was managed as a quarantine pest due to its risk to crops and agricultural exports, with active infestations currently addressed in areas including Boise, Caldwell, and Pocatello. Under the Invasive Species Act, the department was authorized to detect, respond to, and treat invasive species such as quagga and zebra mussels, with golden mussel proposed for inclusion, supported by state, federal, and deficiency-warrant funding. Knight also noted the department had capabilities such as public information submissions and outreach programs for Idahoans. Some species such as voles fell outside existing regulatory authority, and counties may address localized issues through abatement districts. Rat treatment types were discussed, as sanitation and exclusion proved to be preventative and the most effective treatment of rats. (Attachment 2).

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Lakey** asked what opportunities individuals had to communicate with the ISDA on eradication efforts. **Mr. Knight** noted that sometimes infestations spread onto federal lands, which they then coordinated with federal agencies. When infestations spread to private property, the ISDA worked with landowners to limit infestation impacts. The Department conducted seasonal scouting and encouraged early reporting in counties with recurring infestations. **Senator Lakey** asked how federal agencies' response to pest infestations could be improved. **Mr. Knight** responded that the Department maintained ongoing planning and coordination with federal agencies and recognized that federal responses varied due to funding, legal constraints, and planning requirements. **Senator Semmelroth** asked how Idahoans could contribute to the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) data collection process. **Mr. Knight** said the ISDA could create a quick, effective survey that was simple and cost effective.

**PRESENTATION: The Financial Condition of Idaho Agriculture.** **Mr. Brett Wilder**, Assistant Professor and Area Extension Educator for the College of Agricultural and Life Sciences at University of Idaho, illustrated the financial condition of Idaho's agriculture. 2025 was a record year with cash receipts reaching \$12.1 billion. This was largely driven by livestock, while the crop sector faced significant financial stress. **Mr. Wilder** explained Idaho's exports remained critical. He discussed various assistance payment data and covered several trends within Idaho's agricultural industry, which highlighted continued pressure and uncertainty for farmers. (Attachment 3).

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Kohl** noted the recent struggle sugarbeet farmers faced and asked how the federal government could provide relief for local growers. **Mr. Wilder** explained regulation management was key. **Senator Kohl** asked whether there was a lag between supply and demand, and if there was a way to improve feedback and responsiveness, as well as identify potential alternative uses for sugar production. **Mr. Wilder** stated that global oversupply of crops was a significant issue and reducing domestic production alone would not resolve it, given producers' financial obligations. He noted that efforts were being made to find alternative uses for crops. **Senator Lent** asked about the likelihood of Farmer Bridge Assistance payments occurring and the potential market impacts of circulating that level of funding into the agricultural system. **Mr. Wilder** explained the payments were largely already priced into the market and the funding was expected to be used primarily to cover farmers' existing financial obligations. These payments were insufficient to resolve underlying structural issues in agricultural production.

**ADJOURNED:** There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Nichols** adjourned the meeting at 9:17 a.m.

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Senator Nichols  
Chair

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Rachel Verrette  
Secretary