

MINUTES  
**SENATE AGRICULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

**DATE:** Tuesday, March 31, 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 8:01 a.m.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Kohl** moved to approve the Minutes of March 12, 2026. **Senator Taylor** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Senator Lakey** moved to approve the Minutes of March 19, 2026. **Senator Semmelroth** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**MINUTES APPROVAL:** **Vice Chairman Zito** moved to approve the Minutes of March 24, 2026. **Senator Taylor** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

**S 1445** **INVASIVE SPECIES - Adds to existing law to provide that certain rats are invasive species.** **Chairman Nichols** said this legislation declared Norway rats and roof rats as an invasive species and authorized the local government to take reasonable actions to control and contain the increasing rat population. **Representative John Gannon** explained the importance of involving local government to control the rat population due to infestation reaching into street drains, irrigation ditches, and parks. He emphasized that no local government may enter private property in connection with this authority unless the local government had the written permission of the owner.

**DISCUSSION:** **Vice Chairman Zito** asked why legislation needed to be enacted to allow local government to become involved with this issue. **Representative Gannon** replied that under Dillon's rule, cities and counties did not have the jurisdiction to legislate unless expressly granted by the Legislature.

**Mr. Ryan Davidson**, Ada County Commissioner, stated they approached the Legislature for help on this issue. He explained local government could not act on pest management unless authorized by state code. **Vice Chairman Zito** asked if this issue were to continue into next year, whether the State would become financially obligated. **Mr. Davidson** responded since this legislation was not a direct appropriation this year, he believed this issue would not be appropriated next year. **Mr. Davidson** discussed the permanent rat issue in New York City. He said this could potentially become a statewide issue in Idaho. He believed that empowering the county as well as local pest control companies could help resolve this issue. First steps would include creating a website to report rat trapping to understand where rats were primarily concentrated. Secondly, counties planned to contract all of the ground work to local pest control companies. **Senator Blaylock** asked about the discussions held in the House regarding the prior rat bill, as well as distinctions between this legislation and the previous bill. **Representative Gannon**

responded many Representatives believed this was a local government issue rather than a state issue. He explained this legislation differed because it would empower local government jurisdiction whereas the prior bill empowered state jurisdiction. **Senator Blaylock** wanted confirmation that local governments wanted to act but some felt they could not act financially until rats were on the invasive species list. **Representative Gannon** answered in large part yes, but believed counties should have been more eager to act. **Chairman Nichols** asked how this would suit the House. **Representative Gannon** said this legislation was supported in the House. **Senator Lent** requested confirmation that including rats on the invasive species list would permit local government to establish a taxing district. **Representative Gannon** answered affirmatively.

**TESTIMONY:** **Ms. Nancy Daniels**, stated she lived in the Boise Depot Bench neighborhood for 35 years. She discussed her personal experiences and neighborhood efforts regarding rats. She explained how her neighborhood was currently tracking rats and would be willing to utilize a rat reporting website. She requested help from local government.

**Ms. Jayne Rowling**, founder, Rats in Eagle and Beyond, explained this issue had been going on for years, and expected a huge increase due to the exponential rat population growth. She stated individual property owners maintained the responsibility of rat control on their property, however, **Ms. Rowling** believed this issue was beyond private capabilities and requested local government assistance help with this issue.

**DISCUSSION:** **Chairman Nichols** asked if she had previously experienced a rat issue in her neighborhood. **Ms. Daniels** replied she had not.

**Representative Gannon** closed by saying he believed local governments would find the money to fund the issue.

**MOTION:** **Senator Lakey** moved the send **S 1445** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Taylor** seconded the motion.

**DISCUSSION:** **Senator Lakey** compared this issue with the noxious weeds list which the country addressed. He agreed this was an issue of statewide concern that needed to be addressed through local government in coordination with local pest control companies. **Senator Kohl** said he was concerned there would be a fiscal note in the future. **Chairman Nichols** added that since we had a mild winter, rats may be proliferating much faster than prior years.

**VOICE VOTE:** The motion to send **S 1445** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation passed by **voice vote**.

**ADJOURNED:** There being no further business at this time, **Chairman Nichols** adjourned the meeting at 8:29 a.m.

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Senator Nichols  
Chair

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Rachel Verrette  
Secretary