Wisconsin DOT Redefining “Implement of Husbandary” - Meetings Scheduled to Discuss

For the past year, a diverse group of ag interests (PNAAW, PDPW, Custom Forage Harvesters, ag equipment manufacturer) and others (including legislators, DOT and road maintainers) have been meeting to find common ground on the definition of implement of husbandry and the road weight issues common across most of agriculture.

The size and weight of agricultural equipment and the potential impact it has on public roads is the subject of a series of town hall meetings to be held throughout the state over the next four weeks. These meetings are being held prior to legislative actions. It is important at this time to have agricultural interests represented at these meetings as well as other local road users and authorities.

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) are urging the agricultural community, local highway officials and others to attend the meetings. Sessions will provide detailed information on the recommendations of a special study group that reviewed size and weight limits and other issues related to agricultural equipment, also known as implements of husbandry (IoH).

Agricultural equipment is getting larger and heavier which helps in more efficient farm production, but it can also impact pavement and road structures. That’s why WisDOT, in partnership with DATCP, convened the IoH Study Group.

It involved over 20 stakeholders representing various transportation and farm organizations, equipment manufacturers, law enforcement, local officials and the University of Wisconsin-Madison/Extension. Dana Cook and Chris Lindstrom are representatives to the Study Group from PNAAW.

“We recognize that agriculture is a vital element of our state’s economy, but there are limits for our roadway infrastructure that are defined by physics and safety,” says Rory Rhinesmith, deputy administrator of WisDOT’s Division of Transportation System Development and chair of the study group. “IoH equipment can’t exceed the capacity of our roads and bridges and must be able to safely operate with other road users. Our approach was to bring together a knowledgeable group of people committed to finding a balanced solution based on science and the needs of the agricultural community.”
“DATCP was pleased to partner with Wis-DOT on this effort. I hope farmers and other citizens will attend the town hall meetings to get a better understanding of the recommendations,” says Jeff Lyon, DATCP deputy secretary. “The group came up with several options that could lessen the impact on our roads. Obviously, there needs to be a balance between the needs of farming and other road users.”

Workgroup report – Maximum sizes of Implements of Husbandry

The complete IoH Study Group report is at http://www.dot.wisconsin.gov/business/ag/index.htm, see Phase 2 Report. Two of the more challenging issues for the study group were establishing maximum size and gross vehicle and axle weight limits. See the summary on page 3 for the recommendations from the Phase 2 Report. Safety, the capacity of roads and bridges and consideration of commonly used IOH equipment guided the recommendations for size. Road width, overhead wires, bridge standards and the ability to safely maneuver through turns determined the new size parameters. The recommendation on weight allowance is based on engineering analysis and research on the damage done to roads as a result of increased weight. Data from the MnDOT Road Study funded in part by PNAAW was used in the engineering analysis, and to help justify the increases in size and weight requirements.

Providing Feedback

The town hall meetings will offer a chance to ask questions and provide feedback on the proposed size and weight limits.

In addition, the meetings will share other recommendations such as new definitions for IoH, operator requirements for vehicles that exceed base definitions and best practices such as pipelines, nurse trucks and one-way roads. Information collected at meetings and during the comment period (August 14-September 6) with compiled as an addendum to the Phase 2 Report and shared with the IOH Study Group as well as legislative interests.

All of the meetings, co-hosted by the University of Wisconsin Extension, will take place from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. on the dates and locations listed below:

- **August 19** – Madison; UW Extension Office, 1 Fen Oak Drive,
- **August 20** – Stratford; Country Aire Banquet Hall, F1312 County Road P,
- **August 28** – Cashton; Cashton Community Hall, 8111 Main Street
- **August 29** – Green Bay; WisDOT US 41 Brown County DOT Office, 1940 West Mason Street, Green Bay (NOTE: Building is behind Pizza Hut at the corner of Taylor and West Mason Street.)
- **September 3** – Chippewa Falls; Chippewa County Courthouse Large Assembly Room, 711 North Bridge Street, Chippewa Falls

If you are unable to attend the meeting and would like more information or to comment, contact Rory Rhinesmith, Deputy Administrator, Division of Transportation System Development at (608) 267-7111. Written comments regarding the project can be mailed to Mr. Rhinesmith, WisDOT, 4802 Sheboygan Avenue, Room 451, PO Box 7910, Madison, WI 53707-7910 or submitted via email to IoHStudyFeedback@dot.wi.gov
Overview: Draft recommendations and overview of the Phase II Report as of August 5, 2013:

- Clarify IoH Definition:
  - Create a clearer, simpler definition of IoH to reflect today’s agricultural equipment.
  - Commercial Motor Vehicles (CMV) used exclusively for agricultural operations are defined as an IoH CMV
  - All IOH will be exempt from registration.
  - A self-certification will be available for IoH CMVs.

- Create size limits or an “envelope” for IoH:
  - Width envelope:
    - Width of IoH – 15’ (feet); However, an IoH greater than 15’ (feet), but no greater than 17’ (feet) may be operated without written authorization when the IoH operator meets safety requirements to ensure safe passage by other road users.
    - Width of IoH CMV – 10’ (feet).
  - Height envelope: Height of IoH – 13’6” (feet/inches). An IoH greater than 13’6” (feet/inches) may be operated without written authorization. The IoH operator is responsible for ensuring safe clearance of any overhead obstructions.
  - Length envelope: 60’ (feet) for a single IoH; 100’ (feet) for combinations of two IoH; and 70’ (feet) for combinations of three IoH.

- IoH is given an expanded 15% weight allowance over the limits as established by the Federal Bridge Formula, except where posted and during periods of spring thaw. This equates to a maximum single axle weight of 23,000 pounds and a gross vehicle weight of 92,000 pounds. A new IoH weight table will be created to reflect the 15% allowance based on gross vehicle weight, axle weight and spacing.

- Written authorization to exceed the size envelope and weight limits may be requested on an annual basis from the maintaining authority of that roadway. Written authorizations may only be granted when:
  - The operator is 18 years of age and holds a valid driver’s license.
  - IoH meets lighting, marking, and safety requirements pertaining to IoH in s. 347 (safety requirements).
  - A travel or route plan for the IoH is submitted.

Additional conditions may be set by each maintaining authority (local or state) of which the IoH is operating within the context of the written authorization.

- IoH vehicles operating in excess of the 15% allowance will be fined for the amount in excess of standard gross motor vehicle weight or individual axle weight.

- Support exploration of best practices to assist in reducing the wear of roadways and structures. This includes supporting the development of emerging innovations and best practices in manure management.

- Develop a self-certification system for IoH CMVs rather than a plate, sticker, or decal.
Farmers with pigs that have been diagnosed with Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea should adopt manure management biosecurity practices to avoid spreading the disease when handling manure.

The 2013 wheat harvest season is upon us, and soon thereafter, the late summer application of manure on the harvested fields will follow. The risk of spreading Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea (PED) through manure application should be a concern for all farms with pigs exhibiting clinical signs of the disease. PED is spread through oral-fecal contact, manure contaminated boots, clothing, birds and wildlife, transport trailers and other equipment.

Porcine Epidemic Diarrhea is a viral enteric swine disease with these clinical symptoms: diarrhea, fever, vomiting, and death (age dependent). These symptoms are indistinguishable from transmissible gastroenteritis (TGE). According to the Kansas State University, 2013 and Iowa Pork Industry Center TGE and PED are related in that they are both coronaviruses but cross immunity is not provided with infection of either virus.

As of the first of July the disease had been confirmed in more than 200 swine herds in the United States. Spread of the virus continues, and it is both a good animal husbandry practice and a good neighbor policy for all pork farmers with pigs exhibiting clinical signs of PED to obtain a confirmed diagnosis and immediately establish enhanced biosecurity practices to avoid spreading the virus within their own animals and (or) to neighboring swine herds.

A review of literature does not uncover any articles that discuss PED’s virulence in stored and spread manure. Because of PED’s similarities to the TGE virus recommendations for control of disease spread may best be based on practices for controlling TGE.

While viruses in general are rather short lived outside of the host animal Michigan State University Extension warns producers there is some risk of PED spread during manure pumping, transport and application. “Inactivation of viruses in liquid manure” reported that the TGE virus stays virulent more than 8 weeks in stored manure at 40 degrees F and up to 2 weeks in manure at 70 F. Therefore during the summer it is best to avoid hauling manure from pits under barns housing infected pigs for a minimum of 14 days after the animals have stopped showing clinical signs of PED. Assuming stored manure is near 70 F in the summer, 14 days will minimize the virulence of the PED virus in the manure. As the weather and manure cool, the time gap between pigs showing symptoms and manure hauling will need to be extended.

If manure must be removed from barns housing infected pigs, enhanced biosecurity practices are warranted, including:

* Clean, disinfect and dry manure pumping and application equipment – including tractor cabs – when moving between farms and farm sites. Effective PED disinfectants include Clorox, Virkon S, Tek-Trol and 1-Stroke Environ. The greatest risk of PED spread associated with manure spreading may be on manure application equipment when moving from infected barns to uninfected barns.

* All employees (both employees on the farm and custom applicators) working with manure application equipment should change into clean cloths and clean and disinfect footwear when moving between farms and farm sites.

* Custom manure applicators (CMA) should not be allowed access to pigs or to barn entry. Ensure the CMA has a phone number to reach you with questions. Employees and producers handling manure should shower and change into clean clothes and footwear, prior to accessing pigs.

* During field application, fully cover manure with soil by managing injection equipment and application rates to avoid manure boiling up in the injection slot and leaking on headlands. This will limit the possible transfer of the disease by birds and wildlife. According to a Kansas State University factsheet, there is also a possibility of short distant PED aerosol transfer.

Farmers using the services of custom applicators are advised to insist the applicators follow the first three points listed above.

PED will most likely continue to move through the United State’s swine herd. Improved biosecurity practices while handling manure will help limit the spread of the disease.

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