



Alaska State Legislature

Representative John Harris

State Capitol 513, Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182 (907) 465-4859

Sponsor Statement

HB 432

“An act An Act relating to the labeling of animal and poultry feeds and to the agriculture program coordinator; and providing for an effective date.”

The agriculture sector in Alaska is finding its feet and developing into a significant contributor to the state’s economy through the development of a wide range of crops and agricultural products. [HB 432](#) seeks to fix three problems that have become evident in the ability of the division of agriculture to fully respond to the farming community.

These areas of concern include organic crop inspections, feed labeling, and the control of noxious weeds. Part of the reason the division has neglected these problems is because the division is largely funded from the [Ag Revolving Loan Fund](#), with some federal dollars. This has forced the division into a conservative budgeting posture, leaving some important issues unmanaged.

First, either an outside inspector or staff person will need to be hired to determine that organic foods have been grown and processed according to standards in regulations, if the organic label is to be used. Federal organic labeling laws require that an organic food inspector may not have a vested interest in growing or processing the foods that are being certified.

Second, the State of Alaska is the only state that doesn’t enforce a standard for the labeling of animal feed. With growing concerns of spreading contagious diseases through the feeding of rendered animal parts, and the need to balance the diets of pets and farm animals, it is imperative that consumers know what is in the feed they buy that has been produced or mixed in-state. The state needs to enforce the national standards for animal feeds, which are published and readily available.

Finally, noxious weeds continuously threaten Alaska’s native species. We are blessed by our remoteness relative to growing areas of the lower 48 and Canada, but the importation of hay and feed containing seeds of non-native species means that noxious weeds can and do show up in many areas of the state. Confronting this problem and protecting the natural ecosystem of Alaska requires constant vigilance.

HB 432 would address these three problems by requiring the commissioner of DNR to adopt animal feed standards and appoint an agriculture program coordinator to oversee the management of the state’s efforts regarding these issues.