

DOVER

Health Reports

2024



Report of the **Board of Health**

Kay Petersen, MD, Chair
Stephen Kruskall, MD
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Personnel

Jason Belmonte, Health Director
Linda Baldwin-Lyons, Administrative Assistant
Suzanne Hilts, Administrative Assistant
Jennifer Cronin, Animal Inspector
Jim Palmer, Deer Management Agent

The Board of Health (BOH) is a mandated regulatory agency responsible for protecting the public health and environment, with legal obligations, authority, and responsibilities as set forth in the Massachusetts General Laws (MGL) and Commonwealth of Massachusetts Regulations. Various federal statutes further lay out the responsibilities of state and local governments to ensure the public health. The BOH has legal authority to implement and enforce health policies and oversee inspections to protect public and environmental health.

The Board's elected members, agents, and inspectors work to ensure that food, water, soils, and air are protected from contamination that would pose a public health threat. The BOH works to prevent the spread of contagious disease in humans and animals, including diseases, such as tick-borne illnesses, that are transmitted from animals to humans. It is also responsible for ensuring that housing meets minimum health and safety standards. Additional information regarding the BOH can be found on the Town's website (www.doverma.gov).

Environmental Health and Safety

WATER QUALITY AND SUPPLY

In Massachusetts, Public Water Supply (PWS) companies are those that provide water to 15 or more connections, or to 25 or more people. They are regulated by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP). Private water supplies (private wells) provide water to fewer than 15 connections, or fewer than 25 people, and are regulated by the local Boards of Health.

PRIVATE WELLS

In 2024, approximately two-thirds of all households in Dover relied on private wells located on residential properties. The BOH Director is responsible for processing permits for new wells or well improvements, for inspecting the construction of new wells, for inspecting repairs and modifications made to existing wells, for ensuring that flow rates and quantities are satisfactory, for reviewing documentation for new wells and well improvements for compliance with the BOH Water Quality Standards, and (when submitted) for reviewing water quality test results prior to the transfer of property for compliance with the BOH Water Quality Standards.

Homeowner responsibilities include the testing of water quality prior to a transfer of ownership (title change) of a home, including providing the BOH and the home buyer with copies of the test report issued by a certified laboratory prior to the sale of the house. If any proposed renovation work results in an increase in the number of bedrooms in a home (or otherwise results in increased water usage), the owner must obtain a permit from the BOH for a quantity (flow) test to be witnessed by the Health Director prior to the issuance of any building permits. If wells have insufficient flow, they must either be modified or abandoned. Homeowners must replace abandoned wells with new wells that meet the BOH's quantity and quality requirements. Well drillers, water quality testing labs, and engineering firms used must be licensed by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Dover residents must maintain access to wells from the street to enable maintenance, such as pump replacement or redrilling.

In 2024, the BOH issued 20 permits for new wells that included wells used for drinking water, irrigation, and heating/cooling (geothermal). The BOH was not made aware of any drinking water wells that ran dry in 2024.

MassDEP provides valuable information about private wells, water quality standards, and certified testing laboratories at www.mass.gov/private-wells. It also offers a public Web-based searchable database of groundwater wells at www.mass.gov/service-details/well-database.

PUBLIC WATER SUPPLIES

Approximately 35% of Dover households are serviced by six PWS companies that are regulated by the Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities (MassDPU) and MassDEP. The companies that operate in Dover include:

- **Dover Water Department:** This Town-owned PWS serves the Chickering Elementary School, Caryl Park, Caryl House, and Parks and Recreation. Water is sourced from Dover wells operated by the Town.
- **Aquarion Water Company:** Formerly Colonial Water Company, Aquarion serves 645 households, as well as commercial and public buildings, most of which are in or adjacent to the Town center and connected by Town-owned infrastructure. Water is sourced from Aquarion-operated wells in Dover.

- **Glen Ridge Resident Water Trust:** Serves 44 households with water sourced from Natick Public Works.
- **Meadowbrook Water Trust:** 27 households receive water sourced from Natick Public Works and Elm Bank wells, which are operated by Natick Public Works and WhiteWater, Inc.
- **Old Farm Road Water Trust:** 15 households receive water from a local well operated by WhiteWater, Inc.
- **Precious Beginnings Preschool:** Water for this building is sourced from a local well operated by Small Water Systems Services, LLC.

MassDEP publishes information and documents about all PWSs at www.mass.gov/service-details/public-water-supplier-document-search.

BATHING BEACHES

The BOH is responsible for assessing the safety of the water at the Grossman Camp, which is in the Dover portion of Hale Reservation. The recreational camps that use these bodies of water are responsible for testing and reporting the results to the BOH.

SEWAGE DISPOSAL

Because there is no access to a public sewage system in Dover, all buildings require private sewage systems (typically a septic tank and distribution field). Subsurface sewage disposal systems require proper operation and maintenance to avoid failure and expensive repair or replacement. Proper operation includes keeping grease, fats, and oil from draining into a system, avoiding the use of garbage grinders, avoiding hazardous chemicals in laundry products, and promptly repairing leaking toilet tanks and faucets. Proper maintenance includes having septic tanks pumped every other year by a licensed vendor to remove septage. Pumping and other regular maintenance typically costs several hundred dollars. However, it is necessary to prevent septic system failure, which is vastly more expensive.

In addition, some pumps or other mechanical or electric devices installed in innovative alternative wastewater systems (for example, Eljen, FAST, and Presby) require regular maintenance according to the manufacturer's maintenance schedule to prevent system disruption.

The regulations contained in the Massachusetts State Environmental Code, Title 5, and the State Sanitary Code, Chapter 2, require that towns provide for septage disposal. The Town of Dover has an agreement with the Charles River Pollution Control District in Medway to have its septage accepted at their sewage treatment facility. The fee paid by residents to the licensed pumper includes both a pumping charge and treatment facility disposal fee.

To document the required maintenance of wastewater systems, the BOH asks residents to submit servicing documentation. Pumping records

are submitted by the pump companies to the BOH, which also licenses septic system installers and septage haulers and maintains a list of licensees.

MassDEP's Title 5 (310 CMR 15.000 of the State Environmental Code) requires that homes put up for sale undergo a septic system inspection by a state-certified Title 5 inspector. The Town of Dover's Chapter 217 Bylaws ("Sewage Disposal Systems") define site and soil requirements. Home sellers must present Title 5 certification of proper septic system functioning to the BOH. Homes that use cesspools rather than septic tanks and leaching fields cannot receive Title 5 certification and must have new systems installed. During the review and approval of septic system construction plans, the BOH often requires deed covenants that prohibit the installation of garbage grinders and/or require regular maintenance of alternative septic systems.

In 2024, the BOH conducted 22 soil evaluations and percolation tests, 26 building plan reviews, and 88 Title 5 inspections and reviews. The Board also issued permits for 23 new septic systems, 19 septic repairs, 4 home demolitions, 9 trash haulers, and 9 residential swimming pools.

FOOD SAFETY

The BOH adheres to the Massachusetts State Sanitary Code (105 CMR 590.000) when issuing food permits. All food establishments and commercial kitchens require an inspection before a permit is issued. Commercial vendors and private caterers providing food at events, including private functions, must also apply for permits. Residents should contact the BOH if their organizations are unsure about how regulations apply to their planned events.



Photo by Ilene Hoffman; copyright © Ilene Hoffman Photography.

TOBACCO

In 2023, the BOH amended its tobacco regulations for the first time since 2013. The Board voted to cap the number of tobacco license holders in Dover at two. As of 2024, the only two license holders in town are Dover Market and the Mobil gas station.

RECREATIONAL CAMP SAFETY

In Massachusetts, recreational camps for children must be inspected and licensed by the local boards of health in the cities or towns where the camps are located. To be licensed, camps must meet all the minimum health, safety, sanitary, and housing standards established by MassDPH and any additional local requirements. In 2024, the BOH inspected and licensed eight recreational camps in Dover.

GARBAGE COLLECTION

MassDEP prohibits the disposal of food waste with trash. Although many residents have installed kitchen food grinders or disposals, the Board strongly advises against using them because the small particulate matter they create will clog septic system drip fields over time and lead to premature system failure.

The Recycling Committee operates a food-waste drop-off program at the Transfer Station where it maintains drop receptacles. In 2023, the Board of Health formally adopted regulations for private waste haulers. In 2024, nine Trash Hauler Permits were issued.

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE

The BOH, in coordination with the Recycling Committee, conducts the annual Hazardous Waste Collection Day each spring at the Medfield Department of Public Works. Residents may also drop off their hazardous waste on collection days held by other Charles River Household Waste Consortium member towns (Ashland, Bellingham, Franklin, Holliston, Medfield, Milford, Norfolk, Sherborn, and Walpole).

SHARPS DISPOSAL

Massachusetts law prohibits the disposal of medical sharps in household trash. The BOH maintains an approved sharps receptacle at its office on the first floor of the Town House, where residents may safely discard sharps during office hours.

BEAVER ACTIVITY

Beaver activity that leads to flooding periodically is a threat to safety in Dover. In such cases, the BOH issues emergency trapping permits for a limited period. No beaver complaints were received in 2024.

Animal Inspections, Vaccinations, Quarantining

ANIMAL INSPECTIONS

The BOH’s Animal Inspector, Jennifer Cronin, annually inspects cattle, horses, goats, sheep, swine, and other non-domestic animals, as well as the conditions under which they are kept. As population changes occur, the BOH updates its inventory of locations where animals are kept. Active barns are inspected, during which time the Animal Inspector reviews documentation of tuberculin and brucellosis testing, equine Coggins testing, and encephalitis vaccinations, and determines whether the animals appear free from contagious disease. The BOH also regulates manure storage, removal, and composting to protect wetland resources and drinking water.

The following animals were inspected in 2024:

Type of Animal	2024
Horses/Ponies/Miniature Horses/ Donkeys/Mules	125
Alpacas	1
Goats	53
Sheep	28
Swine	5
Ducks	32
Chickens	118

VACCINATIONS/QUARANTINING

MassDPH mandates the vaccination for rabies of all dogs, cats, and ferrets at six months of age or older, or within one month of entering the Commonwealth without proof of prior vaccination, and at least once every three years thereafter. Vaccination orders, under the management of the Animal Inspector, also apply to other domestic animals.

In 2024, the Town recorded nine instances of dog bites and one instance of animals quarantined for wounds of an unknown origin.

MassDPH sets forth stringent quarantine requirements for the prevention of the spread of rabies. Dogs and cats exposed by direct contact, by proximity, or by having received a wound of unknown origin, are assumed to have been infected by a rabid animal. If a dog or cat is currently vaccinated, but for longer than a month prior to exposure, or if it is not currently vaccinated but proof exists of a previous vaccination, it must immediately receive a booster vaccination and be strictly quarantined for 45 days. The Animal Inspector may order that unvaccinated animals be immediately vaccinated and placed under confinement for four months or, failing that, to be euthanized. Vaccination for other domestic animals is also required. The Animal Inspector may order vaccinations for

animals whose health histories are unavailable or not in compliance with vaccine regulations.

The BOH conducted its annual rabies clinic March 16, 2024.

Zoonoses

The BOH is involved with the control of animal-to-human disease transmission (zoonosis), including tick-borne diseases, mosquito-borne diseases, infections from animal bites, and other interactions with animals.

MOSQUITO-BORNE ILLNESS

The two mosquito-borne illnesses of significant concern in eastern Massachusetts are Eastern Equine Encephalitis (EEE) and West Nile Virus (WNV). The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) routinely tests mosquitos for the two viruses from June through October each year.

	EEE	WNV
Cases in Animals	4	0
Cases in Humans, MA	4	18
Cases in Humans, Norfolk County	0	1
Positive Mosquito Samples, MA	97	333
Positive Mosquito Samples, Norfolk County	3	49

The BOH works with the Norfolk County Mosquito Control District (NCMCD). The NCMCD takes an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach to mosquito control, which sometimes includes spraying of insecticide. Homeowners who wish to exempt their property from mosquito-control spraying must file the proper paperwork with the Town Clerk prior to the first of March. For more information, contact NCMCD directly.

TICK-BORNE ILLNESS

Since 2010, the BOH has implemented a yearly Deer Management Plan (DMP), a regulated hunting program based on the experience and guidance of the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife and on Dover-specific rules and regulations. The program only allows bow hunting from tree stands and is administered on Town-owned and other conservation land, as well as on private properties with signed permission from the land-owners. As in past years, signage was posted along trails and at entrances to all properties participating in the DMP. By season’s end on December 31, 2024, a total of 13 deer had been harvested. No injuries or complaints were reported.

Communicable Disease Prevention and Management

COVID-19

Test kits were provided throughout the year at the BOH office and made available to residents.

INFLUENZA

The BOH held its flu/covid clinic on October 18, 2024, at the Department of Public Works, where 128 residents were vaccinated.

Elder Services

The BOH contracts with the Natick Walpole VNA to provide blood-pressure checks for senior citizens through the Council on Aging.

Board of Health Staffing

Full-time Health Director Jason Belmonte oversees two other members of the office staff. Administrative Assistant Suzanne Hilts joined the staff in July 2024 and works 28 hours per week. Linda Baldwin-Lyons also works in the office 20 hours per week and has been serving the Town since 2021. The Board anticipates onboarding a Public Health Nurse in February 2025.



Powisset Farm. Photo courtesy of The Trustees of Reservations.

Report of the Norfolk County Mosquito Control District

David A. Lawson, Director

The Norfolk County Mosquito District's (NCMCD's) operations involve taking an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach to mosquito control that is rational, environmentally sensitive, and cost effective.

Surveillance

NCMCD engages in an intensive mosquito monitoring process through weekly field collections and data analysis, in collaboration with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, to detect disease-vectoring mosquitoes. Virus isolations help us focus our surveillance on areas of concern, thereby allowing us to alert nearby towns of a potential epidemic. Public requests for service alert us to high numbers of nuisance mosquitoes.

In 2024, we had 110 requests for service in the Town of Dover. We submitted 18 samples with three West Nile virus isolations found.

Water Management

The NCMCD reduces the potential for larval mosquito development through a variety of methods under this category. Our Freshwater Water Management Program includes ditch and pond maintenance as well as culvert area clearing to improve water quality and increase water flow. We also collect and recycle off-rim tires to eliminate a common breeding site of mosquitos.

Statistics for 2024 are as follows:

- Culverts cleared: 27
- Drainage ditches checked/hand cleaned: 1,700 feet
- Intensive hand clean/brushing*: 1,400 feet
- Mechanical water management: 0 feet
- Tires collected: 0

**Combined brush cutting and clearing of severely degraded drainage systems or streams by hand.*

Larval Control

When mosquito larval habitat management is not possible, larval mosquito abatement is the most effective and environmentally friendly method of mosquito control. An intensive monitoring program aids in our decision to effectively target culprit locations.

- Spring aerial larvicide applications (April): 96.8 acres
- Larval control (briquets and granular applications by hand): 4.3 acres
- Catch basin treatments (briquets by hand—West Nile virus control): 210 basins
- Abandoned/unopened pool or other manmade structures treated: 0

Adult Control

Adult mosquito control is necessary when public health and/or quality of life is threatened either by disease agents, overwhelming populations, or both. Our surveillance program, along with service request data and state-of-the-art GPS and computer equipment, allows us to focus our treatments on targeted areas. In 2024, NCMCD sprayed, by truck, 3,120 acres with ultra-low-volume aerosol applications of adult mosquito insecticide.



Waterfall at the Upper Mill Pond dam, Noanet Woodlands.
Photo by Jim Repetti.

Report of the
Animal Control Officer

Jennifer Shaw Cronin

The following statistics represent a 2024 year-end report by the Animal Control Officer, whose duties for Dover were conducted on a partial-coverage basis.

Animal control calls: The following animal-related calls were made in 2024:

Loose, missing, and/or returned animals	6
Barking dog complaints	0
Dogs hit by cars	2
Cats hit by cars	2
Deer hit by cars	2
Animals quarantined for wounds of unknown origin	2
Animals removed from a residence	3

Barn inspections: All barns and livestock passed the requirements of the Town of Dover and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The following animals, counted in 2024, were found to be in the best of condition:

Horses	78
Ponies	3
Donkeys	5
Goats	60
Sheep	51
Swine	5
Waterfowl	27
Alpacas	2
Chickens	133

Medfield Animal Shelter: In 2024, the number of dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs, birds, and other small animals adopted from the Medfield Animal Shelter was 502. Statistics for stray or abandoned animals in Dover are as follows:

Abandoned dogs	1
Stray cats	3
Stray rabbits	0

My thanks and appreciation go to the Police Department and the Town of Dover and its residents for their cooperation throughout the year. Thanks also go to the Medfield Animal Shelter, our shelter veterinarian, Rosario Delgado, and the West Street Veterinary Clinic for their continued support of animal control and the animal shelter. Finally, I thank the Town of Medfield’s ACO, Robert LaPlante, for his night and weekend coverage.



Powisset Farm. Photo courtesy of The Trustees of Reservations.

Report of the
Natick Walpole Visiting Nurse Association

Board Officers

Sheila Ahmed, President
Callum Maclean, Treasurer

Agency Leadership Team

Eileen Garvey, CEO
Alyssa Kaiser, RN, BSN, Public Health Nurse Specialist/Coordinator

The Natick Walpole Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) is a nonprofit, community-based, Medicare-certified home care agency providing high-quality home health, palliative, and public health programs and services to people of all ages in Dover and more than 40 surrounding communities.

The VNA’s nursing services include physical, occupational, and speech therapy; medical social work; home health aides; maternal and child health service and pediatric nursing. The agency also has nurses who are certified in intravenous therapy and wound care. The agency delivers telehealth services, which encompass various technologies and tactics for delivering virtual medical, health, and education services.

The primary role of the Public Health Nurse Specialist/Coordinator is to provide public health services and educational programs for the towns we serve. The VNA provides the Town of Dover with the following health services:

Home Care promotes good health and maximum functioning for Dover residents with disabilities. The VNA provides nursing, therapy, social work, and home health-aide services to residents who have been referred to the VNA by physicians, hospitals, and nursing homes. Telehealth services, wound-care specialists, and high-tech nursing care for complex care needs are also available. The VNA conducts home assessments and provides both home care and health promotion visits for residents with chronic illnesses or conditions or who might need information or access to services. Families interested in learning more about available community resources and Town departments seeking information can call the VNA for guidance. The nurse or therapist providing the assessment or information will help the caller identify appropriate services, with the goal of preventing unnecessary hospitalizations or institutionalizations. When possible, the VNA may apply for reimbursement available for the care, as well as perform all the services ordered by the client’s physician.

Senior Health Assessment and Education Clinics are coordinated in conjunction with Dover's Council on Aging. These clinics are developed and led by the Public Health Nurse Specialist to provide health assessment and counseling, and to address various health-related issues, such as medications and chronic diseases. The clinics also cover other community resources available to seniors.

Maternal/Child Health Services promote the health and stability of families during pregnancy, childbirth, and child-rearing years. Our maternal child health nurse specialists are certified lactation counselors who provide assessment, teaching, and support through home visits.

Communicable Disease Services promote the prevention and control of communicable diseases through case finding, education, and the provision of follow-up care in coordination with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Case finding is conducted through the Massachusetts Virtual Epidemiological Network (MAVEN) system. Visits, education, and immunization are all part of this service.

2024 Public Health Statistics for Dover

Total hours spent on blood pressure clinics, flu clinics, as well as communicable disease, TB cases, and MAVEN tracking and follow-ups: 156.

DOVER

Land Use Reports

2024

