

Best Practices for Oversight & Enforcement Working Group *Meeting Notes*

Agenda:

1. Welcome and introductions
2. Background information, Preliminary Research, and Information Received to Date
3. Discussion & Next Steps

Name	Present?
Ernie Gates, R.Ph, FASCP, FIACP, FACA	Present
Matthew Hogan, BVetMed, MS, MRCVS, DACLAM	Present
Sarah Ruiz, MSW	Present
Representative Steven George Xiarhos	Present

Introduction / Icebreaker

The meeting was facilitated by Jess Bresler, Legal Counsel to Representative Mindy Domb, House Chair of the Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery (“MHSUR”), and Gabe Adams-Keane, Chief of Staff to Senator John Velis, Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on MHSUR. Ms. Bresler welcomed members, all of whom were present, and asked members to introduce themselves and share what they’ve learned or found interesting or any questions they still have.

Mr. Gates highlighted that xylazine is a legal veterinary medicine, noting that the veterinarian community is separate from any drug trafficking efforts. He shared that many folks in the pharmaceutical and healthcare fields are not actually aware of what xylazine is.

Dr. Hogan noted his interest in comparative medicine and has found previous meetings to be very engaging. He highlighted the difference between pharmaceutical grade xylazine and nonpharmaceutical grade xylazine and would like to know more about the grade of product that illicit distributors use and where it is obtained.

Deputy Director Ruiz asked whether xylazine is actually manufactured in Massachusetts (Dr. Hogan confirmed it is not) and would like to discuss the Working Group’s charge as it relates to the “manufacture” of xylazine if the drug is not actually produced in the commonwealth.

Representative Xiarhos noted his interest in listening to the experts and stated that, despite his background in law enforcement and usual focus on the enforcement side, he believes the best way to address these issues is through stronger education and prevention efforts. He suggests not making xylazine illegal, but perhaps some enforcement measures related to improper use.

Open Discussion

Ms. Bresler directed members to their packets containing the timeline and benchmarks for the Working Group. She reminded members that the Working Group is charged with investigating and producing findings and recommendations on: best practices to regulate and oversee the production and distribution of xylazine to ensure that it is used solely for its intended purpose as an animal tranquilizer administered by licensed veterinarians and not for human consumption; and whether xylazine should be classified as a controlled substance and appropriate penalties for its illegal production and distribution.

Deputy Director Ruiz began by walking members through the memorandum sent by the Department of Public Health (“DPH”) prior to the first public meeting of the Commission. She noted DPH’s caution against prohibition or increased classification, referring members to a source on the “Iron Clad Law of Prohibition” that discusses the consequences of prohibition (i.e., that it generally results in the creation of something else, potentially worse, that is more concentrated / potent and easier to hide and import). She reminded members that the supply of xylazine mostly comes from online international vendors.

Deputy Director Ruiz believes the Commonwealth should invest its energy and resources in education and supports for people who are exposed to xylazine. Deputy Director Ruiz asked members to think about the Commonwealth’s role in overseeing xylazine use if xylazine is not manufactured or distributed in Massachusetts. She noted that drug checking data confirms that all samples containing xylazine also contained fentanyl. Because there are already controls in place regarding fentanyl, additional controls for xylazine - which is not ever present without fentanyl - are unlikely to be helpful.

Mr. Gates noted there could be increased restrictions on xylazine to require it only for veterinary usage, but that changing scheduling for xylazine would not have much of an impact. Ms. Bresler also reminded members that scheduling at the state level would not have an impact on federal scheduling.

Mr. Hogan discussed the topic of scheduling and veterinary medicine, which is less restrictive than human medicine even for Schedule II or III substances. He noted that xylazine is extremely useful for sedating large animals (e.g., farm animals and horses), and federal scheduling would be a major deterrent and likely result in major pushback from national and state veterinarian organizations. Dr. Hogan also noted that veterinarians are not overly concerned about state regulations and are more focused on federal law and regulations.

Members discussed other state approaches to xylazine (e.g., an Arizona bill classified xylazine as a “dangerous substance,” which the American Veterinarian Community opposed, and Florida law). Commission staff will gather more information on state approaches and known impacts, if any.

Mr. Gates encouraged members to also look for resources provided by state public health departments and other officials. For example, if there is a level of acceptable use, what quantity of xylazine is considered average for a veterinarian to have, and what quantities are being sold.

Dr. Hogan provided more information on xylazine and the alpha 2 agonist class of drugs in which it falls. He reminded members that most Massachusetts-based veterinarians use other alpha 2 agonists (e.g., medetomidine), but stated that xylazine is still used by veterinarians and by researchers who are not veterinarians. Members discussed how xylazine is not purposefully sought by people who use drugs, but rather by veterinarians and researchers for medical purposes. Members discussed the need for more information about the general awareness of xylazine, when it is added to other controlled substances, and pharmaceutical, non-pharmaceutical, and illicit distributors being sources of the information.

Dr. Hogan noted the value of guidance and educational materials about the proper use of the drug, and why and how it is used. Deputy Director Ruiz noted Streetcheck and the importance of drug checking data in terms of prevalence of xylazine in testing. Dr. Hogan stressed that veterinary access to xylazine and other alpha 2 agonist reversal drugs is essential. Dr. Hogan offered to produce information on the legal use of xylazine as a veterinary drug.

Ms. Bresler thanked members for their participation.

Next Steps

Members will split into two sub-groups focused on the two charges of the working group and will utilize a powerpoint presentation (to be developed by Commission staff) to present their findings and recommendations to the full Commission at the public meeting on December 11, 2025.

Mr. Gates and Dr. Hogan: Best practices to regulate and oversee the production and distribution of xylazine to ensure that it is used solely for its intended purpose as an animal tranquilizer administered by licensed veterinarians and not for human consumption

Deputy Director Ruiz and Representative Xiarhos: Whether xylazine should be classified as a controlled substance and appropriate penalties for its illegal production and distribution, if any

Follow-up Items:

- By **November 25, 2025**, Commission staff will send members: (1) notes from this meeting; (2) an early draft of the powerpoint presentation; and (3) a link to a shared google drive folder where members should save their work and sources they find.
- Members will work to send and/or save on the google drive all information, resources, and sources by **December 2, 2025** to ensure Commission staff have sufficient time to produce a final draft of the presentation for member approval.
- Commission staff will send final drafts of presentation materials to Working Group Members for review no later than **December 4, 2025 at 12pm**.
- Working Group Members will provide feedback, recommendations for changes, and final approval of the presentation materials by **December 9, 2025 at 12pm**.
 - Commission staff will work closely with members and will be available to meet with any member who wishes to review findings, recommendations, or presentation content.

At 3:21pm, Mr. Gates moved to **ADJOURN**. Dr. Hogan seconded the motion.