



Western Stock Growers' Association

BULLETIN #2

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UPDATE: Bovine TB in Alberta

This update contains information from two conference calls with CFIA and industry stakeholders on November 4 and November 8.

What we know:

- As of November 8, there are 35 herds under quarantine. That includes two herds in Saskatchewan identified in the CFIA trace-out and risk assessment process.
- There is only one positive animal to date but confirmatory evaluation of reactor animals is just beginning.
- The destruction of the index herd (located on three premises), including the calves, started last week. The compensation process has been initiated.
- Seven herds have been tested using the caudal fold skin test and the ELISA blood test. CFIA is bringing in more staff to increase capacity both for testing and in the lab. It will take time to get through testing of all 35 herds.
- CFIA will be performing 52 enhanced post-mortem on animals on November 9. These 52 represent reactors in the initial testing. These animals come from two of the three index herds and one herd considered high-risk. These results will in large part inform the overall risk assessment and influence the scope and scale of the investigation going forward.
- The CFIA trace-out involves tracing the activities of animals that have moved off quarantined premises over the last five years. To date in that trace-out, they have identified some individual animals that are residing in feedlots. In these cases, just the identified animal is placed under quarantine, not the pen mates and not the feedlot. Pen mates that are market ready are able to be shipped for slaughter with CFIA movement permission and will be tested post-mortem at the plant. The trace-out individual animals are considered to be part of the infected herd and will be ordered destroyed.
- There is expected to be between 2-4 % reactors in the tested animals. Only those animals that are identified as reactors will be slaughtered and have an enhanced post-mortem performed on them. The rest of the herd will remain in quarantine. In the post-mortem, there will be a visual exam for TB like lesions, as well as samples for microscopic examination, a PCR test and the culture. The timeline for the PCR is much shorter than for the culture but the culture is considered the 'gold standard' test. A positive PCR test indicates a positive for bovine tuberculosis and will trigger herd depopulation but the culture will still be processed to be sure. A negative PCR test does not prove a negative presence of bovine TB. The culture test will be the deciding factor. The causative organism is slow growing so the culture (in the absence of growth) will not be ruled negative until at least eight weeks have elapsed.
- A negative culture result on all animals will not necessarily release the animals from quarantine. Neither will a situation of having no reactors to the caudal fold and ELISA blood tests (although this situation is unlikely). The CFIA has an extensive process for quarantine release that includes factoring in the data collected on the epidemiology from the index herds and other herds tested.

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- The strain of bovine tuberculosis identified has been compared to the Canadian TB database and it has never been seen in Canada before, wildlife and domestic livestock included. CFIA was given access to the US database for comparison. The strain has been detected in the US previously and is a relatively new strain.
- The province has begun visual monitoring on the elk population in the Suffield block and will initiate collection of tissue samples on any animals identified as having suspect physical symptoms.
- Because of the large number of at risk premises and animals, and the length of time required to conclusively rule out or confirm TB in those animals, this investigation is going to take several months to complete.
- At the end of the day herds / animals will either be released from quarantine so that they can be marketed; or they will be ordered destroyed with compensation at fair market value payable. In either case the better the animals' con-



Communication Woes

WSGA communicated to CFIA concern for the lack of information and contact with the ranchers whose animals are under quarantine. We were assured CFIA is making increased efforts over the past couple of days to contact these ranchers. They are also sending out an information package to ranchers in the area affected.

Ranchers who are not having luck getting phone contact with CFIA are asked to also use the link in the additional information section at:

<http://inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/diseases/reportable/tuberculosis/investigation-southeast-alberta/eng/1477438380160/1477438380659>

You can also call the WSGA and let us know if you are having trouble contacting the CFIA. We can add to your efforts to get results.

If you are looking for up-to-date information, the CFIA has created a web page and have committed to continually updating the page. The investigation overview is at:

<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/diseases/reportable/tuberculosis/investigation-se-alberta-and-sw-saskatchewan/eng/1477438380160/1477438380659>

Financial Aid for Ranchers Affected by Bovine TB

As the days under quarantine turn into months, the ranchers affected may need assistance to carry them until their animals are released from quarantine or are destroyed with compensation. The Government of Alberta has put together a fact sheet with information on financial support for cattle producers affected by bovine TB.

To access this fact sheet, [CLICK HERE](#)