



Questions and Answers: **Bovine Tuberculosis Case** **in Rock County**

The Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) announced on June 1, 2009, that a cow from a herd of beef cattle in Rock County had tested positive for bovine tuberculosis (TB). NDA staff, along with staff from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), is conducting an epidemiological investigation to determine the source of the infection, and stem the potential spread of the disease.

What is Bovine Tuberculosis?

- Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) is a slow, progressive disease that is difficult to diagnose in the early stages; however, as the disease progresses, animals can exhibit emaciation, lethargy, weakness, anorexia, low-grade fever, and pneumonia with a chronic, moist cough.

How is TB spread?

- Through direct nose to nose contact in cattle herds. It also can be spread from cow to calf via milk, saliva and manure. That is why we have prioritized finding the animals that could have had contact with the affected herd via shared fence lines. It is rare, but possible to spread the disease via manure carried on vehicles, shoes and equipment.

What is the general process associated with the epidemiological investigation?

- We have an incident command center located in Rock County. Staff from our Bureau of Animal Industry, along with federal support, are in the area and continue to contact the owners of premises where cattle may have had direct (fence to fence) contact with the affected herd. Those herds are all being quarantined.
- The next step is to conduct TB testing on all of the cattle (over 12 months of age) on the quarantined premises. The testing process involves, injecting each bovine with a Tuberculin. Three days later, staff will need to examine each bovine for a reaction to the Tuberculin.
- The epidemiological investigation is continuing, which includes trying to trace the movement of all cattle into and from the affected herd. This entire process is going to be extremely time consuming and will continue for an undetermined amount of time.

What radius from the affected premises are you concentrating on right now?

- We are most concerned about the neighboring pastures where cattle may have had direct (fence to fence) contact with the affected herd.

I live in Rock County. Can I move my cattle?

- At present time, there are no restrictions on cattle movement with the exception of the cattle at any of the quarantined premises. With that said, if you do move your cattle, we encourage you to keep good records in case our epidemiological investigation leads us to your herd.

I am planning to move cattle into Rock County for grazing purposes. Can I?

- If you plan to bring cattle into Rock County, please contact the Nebraska Department of Agriculture at (402) 471-2351 with your name, telephone number and the location to which you are planning to transport your cattle. One of our inspectors will be in contact with you as soon as possible.

What can I do to protect my cattle herd from contracting TB?

- There are a few things you as a producer can do to help minimize the possibility of infection as you go about your daily business:
 - Remember to practice good biosecurity at your premise.
 - When bringing a new animal onto your premise, do not immediately commingle the animals. Keep the new animals in isolation for 60 days. An additional assurance would be to test the animals prior to introducing them into your herd.
 - Restrict or eliminate all contact between your herd and other herds.
 - Restrict on-site visitors from contact with your herd, except for our regulatory personnel. This includes milk haulers, feed delivery personnel and anyone who may have contact with other herds.

Will cattle need to be slaughtered as a result of this situation?

- It is too early to determine exactly what will happen with the affected herd or any of the quarantined herds. Under certain circumstances it may be determined that depopulation (slaughter) of some or all herd members is the best course of action.
- There are a variety of factors that go into such a critical action and the decision is not made without a great deal of discussion between animal health officials and herd owners.

Can my vehicle/boots/trailer transmit the disease?

- It would be very rare, but it is possible. We'd suggest that you consider thoroughly cleaning any vehicles, trailers, etc. that have been somewhere where animals (other than your own) were comingled. While the possibility is remote, disease can be transported by manure stuck on, among other things, the wheels, the tires and fenders of your truck and trailer.
- We'd also suggest that you disinfect the soles of your footwear. This can be done by using a solution of ¼ cup bleach per gallon of water.

Will you be publically identifying the affected herd, or any of the quarantined herds?

- It is the NDA's policy not to release the exact location of the premises due to the fact that the epidemiological investigation is ongoing. It's a matter of confidentiality as we work to understand the details of the case. However, we do have NDA staff at the location, and we continue to make contact with the producers who may be impacted by the situation.

Is it safe for me to go to the auction market?

- It is recommended that after you visit an auction market you not wear the same clothes, including footwear, around your herd until you've cleaned and disinfected them. For footwear, we'd recommend a solution of ¼ cup bleach per gallon of water. If bringing cattle home from the auction market, isolate them from your herd for 60 days. You may consider testing those cattle before allowing them to comingle with your existing herd. Make sure to thoroughly clean your vehicle and trailer.

Are we going to lose our USDA - TB Free status? What happens if we do lose it?

- That is a possibility, but it is too early for us to know the answer to that question. If our free status is lost, producers that are transporting or selling animals across state lines will have to test their animals prior to transport. This will be an additional expense to the producer.

For more information contact NDA at 800-831-0550 or visit www.agr.ne.gov