



Texas Cattle Tuberculosis

What is Cattle Tuberculosis?

Cattle tuberculosis (TB) is a chronic debilitating disease of cattle caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium bovis* (M. bovis). Human tuberculosis, historically known as “consumption” was usually caused by a closely related type of bacteria, but can be caused by the cattle strain as well. A variety of other species of animals may be susceptible to cattle tuberculosis, including elk, deer, bison, goats, swine, and cats. Sheep and horses are rarely affected.

Cattle TB is primarily a respiratory disease affecting the lungs, head and chest lymph nodes. It may also affect lymph nodes along the animal’s digestive tract. Symptoms can include progressive weight loss, chronic cough and unexplained death loss.

Cattle TB has a long incubation period. It could be months or years from the time an animal is infected until signs of illness are noticeable. Tuberculosis was once the most prevalent infectious disease found in cattle and swine in the U.S. In the early part of this century, the disease caused more losses among U.S. farm animals than all other infectious diseases combined.

In 2000, Texas won a battle against cattle TB, earning the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) TB accredited-free status. In 2002 however, that status was revoked when two infected cattle herds were detected. After extensive testing, Texas regained its TB-free status from USDA in October 2006. This effort included testing 2,014 purebred beef operations and all 818 of the state’s dairies. Slaughter surveillance was also greatly enhanced at that time to ensure that any remaining TB infected herds would be detected.

Cattle TB is most often detected through carcass inspection at slaughter plants. Internal lesions that are identified by inspectors are collected and forwarded to a laboratory for confirmation of the disease. Efforts are made to track or “trace” the animal back to its herd of origin so that herd-mates or other exposed cattle can be tested.

Like many other diseases, cattle TB transmission occurs more easily when animals are concentrated in close confinement. Infected animals normally spread the TB bacteria to their herd mates by expelling infected droplets from their lungs. Ingestion of the bacteria is also possible.

The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) is diligently working with the Texas cattle industry to maintain Texas’ TB-free status. Several regulation changes have been implemented in recent years to aid in tracing exposed or diseased animals, and to help guard against re-introduction of TB.

The following TAHC regulations help protect Texas cattle from TB:

Dairy cattle, regardless of age or sex, must be identified prior to movement within Texas or entry into the state. Tags are NOT to be removed by subsequent owners.

Sexually intact dairy cattle, two months of age and older entering Texas from another state must:

- Be individually identified and listed on a health certificate prior to movement
- Be TB tested within 60 days prior to entering the state, or;
- Originate from a TB free accredited herd, or;
- Move directly to an approved slaughter establishment without a TB test, or;
- Move to an approved feedlot with a TAHC entry permit

Regardless of reproductive status, test history, or Mexican State of origin, Holstein and Holstein cross cattle are prohibited from entering Texas from Mexico due to the high prevalence of TB in Mexican dairies.

Sexually intact dairy cattle younger than two months of age entering Texas from another state must:

- Have a TAHC entry permit and be TB tested upon reaching two months of age
- Be officially identified and accompanied by a health certificate.

Mexican origin event cattle must:

- Be retested in 60 to 120 days of entry into Texas from Mexico by a Texas veterinarian
- Receive a permit prior to entry into the state from another state
- Have an official permanent form of identification and be listed individually on a health certificate prior to entry
- Possess a current negative TB test performed within previous 12 months at all times

Sexually intact beef cattle in Texas over 18 months of age must have an official permanent form of identification applied prior to change of ownership

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Why tag dairy cattle?

Years of work may be expended tracing the movement of TB infected or exposed cattle. Identification is crucial for epidemiologists to identify the source and movement of diseased or exposed animals, and to trace and prevent spread of the disease. Dairy animals, managed in close confinement are at a greater risk for disease exposure if an infected animal is in the herd. All dairy cattle **MUST** be tagged prior to movement, regardless of age or sex.

Q: I'm a beef producer with one dairy cow; do I need to tag her?

A: Yes, she needs to be tagged before transporting to market or slaughter, or before being transferred to another owner.

Q: Who's responsible for identifying dairy cattle before movement?

A: The owner or manager of the animal is responsible for ensuring that dairy animals are identified before movement.

Q: Is there additional record keeping?

A: The owner is not required to keep records of the identified animals.

Q: Where can I get tags?

A: Contact your TAHC Region office, private veterinarian, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office, or go to the TAHC homepage, www.tahc.texas.gov and find the nearest Tag Allocation Partner.

What types of Dairy ID are acceptable?

- USDA alphanumeric tests tags (USDA silver tags)
- USDA alphanumeric brucellosis calf-hood vaccination tags (USDA orange tags)
- Dairy Herd Improvement Association (DHIA) tags
- Official breed registry tattoos or firebrand
- Commercially produced cattle-style clip, flap or button tags that identify the dairy or owner and include a unique animal number in the herd

USDA approved Animal Identification Number (AIN) tags for official identification of individual animals.

Three forms of official AIN tags are available:

1. Manufacturer coded "900" series RFID tags, available from many feed or supply stores
2. USA prefix RFID tags
3. Country code "840" series RFID tags. Producers who use these must have their premises registered



Information provided by the:
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