



CATTLE TUBERCULOSIS

FACT SHEET

ABOUT CATTLE TUBERCULOSIS

Cattle tuberculosis (TB) is a contagious, chronic, respiratory disease caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium bovis* (*M. bovis*). This strain of TB can also affect other species of animals including elk, deer, bison, goats, swine, and cats. Sheep and horses are rarely affected. Tuberculosis can affect humans.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

Cattle tuberculosis has a long incubation period and clinical signs of infection may not always be visible, especially in the early stages of an infection.

During later stages of infection, clinical signs may include:

- weight loss
- anorexia
- drowsiness
- weakness
- low-grade fever
- pneumonia with a chronic, moist cough
- enlarged lymph nodes

TRANSMISSION

TB is transmitted through airborne particles from the respiratory tract of infected animals or people. In the United States, the two most common methods of introduction are purchase of or exposure to infected cattle or infected free-ranging wildlife.

Cattle can become infected via inhalation or ingestion. The bacteria can spread through contaminated feed or watering sites, bodily fluids, or pass from infected cow to nursing calf. Risk of exposure is greater in confined areas, such as barns with poor ventilation.

DIAGNOSIS

There are a variety of tests available for diagnosing TB in cattle. The primary method of testing is the Caudal Fold Tuberculin (CFT) Test. Authorized veterinarians inject tuberculin in between the layers of the caudal tail fold, and are able to determine presence of disease based on reaction to the injection (swelling, hardness, etc.). If this occurs, the animal is considered suspect and further testing is required.

Upon laboratory confirmation of the disease, the TAHC will work closely with the affected owner to prevent disease spread by restricting animal movement and conducting an epidemiological investigation.

REPORTING TUBERCULOSIS

Tuberculosis is listed as a reportable disease to the TAHC. The Texas Administrative Code, Title 4, Part 2, Chapter 43 requires that all confirmed cases of TB be reported to the TAHC within 48 hours of diagnosis. Reports can be made to a TAHC region office or to the TAHC headquarters at 1-800-550-8242.

ERADICATION OR CONTROL PROGRAMS

In order to protect Texas animals from TB, the USDA and TAHC have regulations in place to prevent the introduction and spread of TB. Regulations outline the requirements for movement, testing, identification, record keeping, surveillance, and approved facilities.

For more information about the TAHC TB regulations, visit: <https://bit.ly/3buKh69>

PREVENTION

To reduce risk of exposure to cattle herds, livestock owners can implement a variety of best practices to help keep TB out of their animals.

Owners should test for TB, confirm that TB is not present prior to purchase of animals, purchase animals from an accredited TB-free herd, restrict exposure to other herds and free-ranging wildlife, routinely disinfect facilities and trailers that house animals, pasteurize waste milk and colostrum on the farm, and maintain a healthy boundary between farm visitors such as milk haulers, feed delivery personnel and anyone who may have had contact with other herds.

HUMAN HEALTH PRECAUTIONS

Most people are at very low risk for being infected with *M. bovis*. People at a higher risk include individuals who work with cattle or products from these animals, and people who consume contaminated, unpasteurized dairy products. If you suspect you have TB, contact your doctor immediately.

To learn more about how *M. bovis* affects people visit: <https://bit.ly/2Osp7VH>