

Bovine Tuberculosis



Eradication Project

Is your beef or dairy farm at risk for bovine TB from wildlife?

Bovine tuberculosis is a chronic infectious disease of cattle and other mammals. **Bovine TB is costly to the livestock industry, can create trade barriers and is a human health threat.** Beef and dairy farmers can decrease the risk of exposing their cattle to bovine TB by limiting cattle-to-deer contact and protecting cattle feed from wildlife.

Movement restrictions and statewide identification have helped to reduce the risk of infection from other cattle. However, Michigan is unique in that several wildlife species in northeast Lower Michigan have also tested positive for bovine TB. Wild, white-tailed deer serve as a reservoir and a potential source of infection for cattle. Because of the nature of the TB bacteria, deer behavior, and general farming practices, perhaps the greatest risk of infection for cattle is feed and water contaminated by infected deer.

Quick Facts:

- The bovine TB bacteria can persist on hay and other feedstuffs for months.
- Potentially infected deer are more likely to spread TB indirectly, by contaminating feed, than by direct interactions with cattle.
- Beef and dairy farms are often attractive to deer, and deer commonly enter farms for food, water, and shelter.

While the DNR and hunters are working toward eradication of TB in the wild deer population, livestock producers can take steps to prevent their herds from becoming infected with bovine TB. Not all measures will work for every farm, so it is important to identify specific risks and specific steps that each producer can take. Farmers can use different methods to decrease risk of TB infection including protecting feed, decreasing wildlife activity on areas of the farm where animals and feed exist, and preventing wildlife intrusion into livestock areas.

Wildlife TB Risk - Quick Assessment

- Are hay bales left or stored outside, away from farm buildings?
- Do wildlife ever eat cattle feed (forage or concentrate)?
- Are deer (or signs of deer) seen where cattle eat or live?

- Are raccoons or opossums (or evidence - tracks/droppings) commonly seen in or around farm buildings?
- Do wildlife frequently cause crop damage?
- Do cattle eat or congregate near woods or out of sight of buildings?
- Are cattle commonly given more feed than they can eat in one day or one week?
- Do deer ever eat excess or waste feed?
- Are deer more frequently seen around the farm in the winter months than in the summer?
- Do cattle regularly pasture in wooded areas?
- Are groups of more than 10 deer seen in close proximity to cattle areas?
- Do cattle use natural water sources for drinking?
- Is there a deer wintering area near the farm?
- Are there any additional factors present that may attract deer (fruit trees, mineral feeders, etc.)?

If you answered **Yes** to one or more of the above questions, your wildlife TB risk may be high. The following contacts can help provide some ideas for possible risk reduction strategies. The objective for wildlife TB risk reduction is to use a combination of measures that fits well with the individual farm location and situation to provide effective TB prevention.

Protect your investment. Leave a farming legacy. Decrease the risk of TB transmission from wildlife.

Only you can prevent bovine TB. Store your feed responsibly and minimize wildlife access to feed and water.

Contact Information

Who do beef and dairy cattle farmers call for help?

- Technical assistance (wildlife)
- Fencing

USDA Wildlife Services

Gaylord Office - (989) 705-8467

Lansing Office - (517) 336-1928

- Wildlife risk surveys

MI Dept. of Agriculture

Atlanta Office - (888) 565-8626

Lansing Office - (517) 373-1077

- Disease Control Permits

MI Dept. of Natural Resources

Gaylord Office - (989) 732-3541

- General Information

MSU Extension Office in your area

Mio (Dairy) - (989) 826-1160

Harrisville (Beef) - (989) 724-6478

www.michigan.gov/bovinetb