

Michigan Bovine Tuberculosis Eradication Project

Michigan Department of Agriculture • Michigan Department of Natural Resources • Michigan Department of Community Health
United States Department of Agriculture • Michigan State University

Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

1. Q. What is Tuberculosis (TB)?

- A. Tuberculosis (TB) is a serious disease caused when bacteria attack the respiratory system. There are three main types of TB – human, avian, and bovine.
- i. Human TB is rarely transmitted to animals.
 - ii. Avian TB is typically restricted to birds (pigs and occasionally other animals have also been found to be susceptible); and bovine TB – or cattle TB – is the most infectious, capable of infecting most mammals.
 - iii. Although bovine TB was once relatively common in cattle in the U.S., it has historically been a very rare disease in wild deer. Prior to 1994, only eight previous occurrences of bovine TB in wild deer had been reported in North America.

In 1994, a hunter in southwestern Alpena County shot a 4-year-old male white-tailed deer infected with bovine TB. The only other time the disease was found in a wild deer in Michigan was in 1975, when a hunter killed a 9-year-old bovine TB-infected female white-tailed deer in Alcona County.

2. Q. How many cases with this strain of bovine TB have been reported in Michigan?

- A. Since bovine TB surveillance testing began in 1994, the State of Michigan has confirmed this unique strain of the infection in two Michigan people, 42 cattle herds, two privately owned cervid herds, and 525 free-ranging deer.
- i. Alpena County senior citizen (died from unrelated causes – diagnosed after autopsy) in 2002.
 - ii. Alcona County hunter (poked himself while field dressing a deer - recovered) in 2004.

3. Q. Since this doesn't really seem to kill deer or people, can we ignore this problem?

- A. The on-going presence of bovine TB in wild deer and cattle threatens the ability of Michigan cattle producers to compete in the interstate cattle market and also impacts the travel and tourism/business climate in northern Lower Michigan.

Currently, states which have been declared bovine TB-free by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) demand assurances Michigan cattle don't present a TB risk to their cattle.

The potential for bovine TB to infect humans, the increased costs associated with cattle testing and movement permits, and the economic impact TB regulations have on the state are the primary reasons Michigan is working at eradicating this disease.

4. Q. After ten years, where does the Michigan Bovine TB Program stand?

- A. Veterinarians have tested all known cattle, bison, goat, and privately owned deer herds in the entire state at least once for TB and because of the Michigan Department of Agriculture's (MDA) electronic identification program (EID) have been able to quickly identify any potentially exposed cattle moved under permit to other parts of Michigan. MDA's quick response to the test results has enabled the department to prevent the spread of TB from cattle to other farms in the state.

In order to open markets and regain bovine TB-free status from USDA, Michigan must adopt a program that can find TB-positive cattle and efficiently trace potentially exposed cattle. The Michigan Animal Industry Act requires zones that identify regulatory levels for disease management. These zonal requirements include mandatory disease testing.

With participation and input from stakeholders, the State of Michigan has:

1. Paid for producer ear tags in the Modified Accredited Zone (MAZ).
2. Provided animal handling equipment in the MAZ.
3. Provided no-cost testing to producers in the MAZ.
4. Provided fair-market value reimbursement for any cattle ordered to be destroyed.

5. Q. Where is bovine TB found in Michigan?

- A. Michigan calls the infected zone of the northern Lower Peninsula, the Modified Accredited Zone (MAZ). The MAZ comprises Alcona, Alpena, Antrim, Charlevoix, Cheboygan, Crawford, Emmet, Montmorency, Oscoda, Otsego, and Presque Isle counties and portions of Iosco and Ogemaw counties that are north of the southernmost boundary of the Huron National Forest and the Au Sable State Forest. A map showing all the positive animals found in Michigan can be viewed at: www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases.

6. Q. MDA seems to be making many program changes lately, what's up?

- A. The USDA-Veterinary Services (VS) conducts an annual bovine TB Program review to evaluate the effectiveness of Michigan's eradication efforts. These comprehensive assessments include: reviews of herd testing/surveillance; control of animal movements; reducing risk of TB transmission from wildlife; and educational efforts to prevent bovine TB infection in humans.

7. Q. What did the bovine TB program review find?

- A. While Michigan has made significant progress, it would be a mistake to assume the battle with bovine TB is close to being won. The latest USDA annual TB Program review (March 2007) made it clear the fate of livestock and wildlife TB eradication programs are linked; and it is not an option to maintain the status quo indefinitely - failure to progress

threatens both Michigan's status and future federal funding for bovine TB eradication efforts.

8. Q. What changes are forthcoming?

A. The USDA-VS review team identified changes necessary for Michigan to maintain its current status. The changes must be in place for one year before USDA will consider advancing the status of any zone. Specific changes include:

1. Tighter statewide control of cattle movements.
2. More consistent use of animal identification.
3. Increased emphasis on wildlife risk mitigation plans for cattle herds in the MAZ.
4. Annual whole herd TB testing of terminal operations (cattle intended for slaughter) in the MAZ.
5. Reconciliation of herd inventories in the MAZ every year (including small-farm, freezer beef herds).
6. Increased monitoring of livestock haulers - to check for movement certificates - on Michigan roads and north across the Mackinac Bridge.
7. Tougher restrictions on agricultural management practices that may play a part in the transmission of bovine TB.
8. Increased information for producers on the risk of consuming non-USDA inspected beef.
9. More cost-effective use of federal and state resources dedicated to the TB program.

9. Q. Why is MDA requiring a movement certificate for cattle?

A. Movement across boundaries is considered a risk for spreading bovine TB. In order to obtain TB-free status for the Modified Advanced Accredited Zone (MAAZ), or even maintain the Michigan's current split-state-status, USDA is requiring movement certificates for cattle. It is the authority of USDA to grant zone status.

10. Q. Will I need to stop at the Mackinac Bridge check point?

A. Yes. All cattle and bison transported north across the Mackinac Bridge and livestock transportation equipment (vehicles) must stop for inspection.

11. Q. Why when only one cow is infected is the whole herd depopulated?

A. Bovine TB is a slow growing bacteria that is highly contagious. Because cattle feed in close proximity to each other it's very easy for the disease for the disease

to be transmitted between animals. Therefore, a herd is considered exposed to bovine TB and others will eventually develop the disease.

12. Q. How is a producer paid when a farm is depopulated?

- A. The producer is contacted and arrangements for herd appraisal are made. When there is an agreement on the fair market value of the cattle, the herd is removed and the producer receives a check from USDA for the agreed upon amount. Fair market value is based upon the current market prices, receipts, and animal health.