

News Release

Texas Animal Health Commission

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Terry Beals, DVM • Executive Director

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Keep Those Dogies Movin! Cattle Transport Easier with Brucellosis Beaten Back

Planning to bring cattle to Texas from other states for grazing or breeding? Importing the animals is easier, now that brucellosis has been wiped out in 44 states, with Kansas the latest to reach Class "Free." Texas and five other states---Louisiana, South Dakota, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Florida--are Class "A," meaning these states haven't had 12 consecutive months without a case of the bacterial disease that can cause cows to abort, deliver weak calves or less milk. In some cases, diseased cattle may have no signs of disease, but are capable of spreading infection.



"As of the first of August, Texas had four herds quarantined because of cattle brucellosis," said Dr. Terry Beals, state veterinarian and head of the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC), the state's livestock health regulatory agency. These herds were in Culberson County in far West Texas, near El Paso; in Palo Pinto, near the Dallas Metroplex; in Henderson County, in East Texas; and in Matagorda County, on the Texas coast.



"Although that sounds great, we have to look at 12 consecutive months. We've had 22 infected herds during the past dozen months, a far cry from the zero infected herds we must have to earn Class 'Free' designation. Luckily, we have state and federal depopulation money, so we offer buy-outs for infected herds and get them off our official herd count quickly."

"As states whip brucellosis, it gets easier to move cattle interstate," he said. "Conversely it could become more difficult for 'clean' states to accept our cattle, if we don't finish our battle against the disease."

Cattle from Class "Free" states don't need a brucellosis test for entering Texas, but like all livestock entering the state, the animals need a certificate of veterinary inspection, issued within the past 30 days.

If they originate from a Class "A" state, sexually intact cattle 18 months of age or older moving to Texas must have a negative test for cattle brucellosis, unless the animals originate from a certified brucellosis-free herd. The cattle must either have the negative test within 30 days prior to entry, or move directly to a USDA Specifically Approved Texas livestock market, where they'll undergo a test prior to change of ownership.

To bolster immunity against possible brucellosis exposure, heifers between four and 12 months of age entering Texas must be vaccinated with RB-51, the official brucellosis vaccine. Heifers moving through a Texas livestock market may be vaccinated at the market and be transported without restrictions. (The TAHC does not pay for this vaccination.) If out-of-state heifers are hauled directly to a Texas farm or ranch, they may enter on a calfhood vaccination permit and must be vaccinated at the owner's expense within 14 days after arrival.

RB-51 vaccine does not cause "false-positive" test results on brucellosis tests, Dr. Beals noted. This has allowed the TAHC to lower the brucellosis test-eligible age for sexually intact cattle to 18 months of age or older, he explained. Testing cattle at a younger age allows a 'wider net' to be cast for disease and catches infection sooner, hopefully before it can spread throughout a herd. When the old Strain 19 vaccine was used, more time was required between vaccination and testing, to reduce the possibility of confusing test results.



As an added precaution, dairy and registered beef breeding cattle 18 months of age or older also must have a negative tuberculosis (TB) test within the previous six months, if they're from a state that isn't Accredited TB-free. (The test can be skipped, if cattle originated from an accredited TB-free herd.) States besides Texas that are not Accredited TB-free include: California, Michigan, New Mexico and Pennsylvania.

Moving cattle within Texas

Texas cattle sold within the state aren't required to have a certificate of veterinary inspection, but a brucellosis test is required for sexually intact cattle 18 months of age or older, whether the animals are sold through a market or by private treaty unless they are from a brucellosis certified-free herd.

"More than 2 million brucellosis tests are run in Texas each year, and historically, brucellosis infection is usually detected by testing cattle at the livestock market. When an infected herd is detected, we also test nearby or 'adjacent' herds and frequently uncover additional cases," said Dr. Beals.

extra efforts of producers, private veterinary practitioners and regulatory staff, we've made great progress in eradicating brucellosis.

Dr. Beals reminded ranchers that state and federal depopulation funds are available to buy infected cattle herds. "Between the salvage (slaughter) payment and depopulation funds, the rancher receives market value," he said. "Producers who have infection can get out from under quarantine in a few weeks and be back in business with 'clean' cattle quickly."

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