



TAD News

May 2007

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Texas' TB-free status could be at risk

Dairymen across Texas have worked hard and spent lots of money, time and effort to eradicate TB from their herds over the past few years, but concerns remain.

Bovine TB in cattle herds is showing up in adjacent states. With four herds in New Mexico and one in Oklahoma with reported TB positive tests, Texas dairymen can't be assured that their herds are not at risk for exposure.

How can that happen? Where a new case of TB is identified, that animal had to have been exposed to an infected animal. There is strong evidence that the positive New Mexico herds were linked to young dairy heifers moved from their birth site to a commercial calf raising operator. In many instances, the Texas Animal Health Commission staff discovered animal identification and movement records were inadequate to trace back the animals in question.

Results from the cold trail of tracking cattle exposed to "known TB reactors" has prompted TAHC staff to introduce proposed rule changes that were considered at the commission's May 10 meeting.

Once the proposed rule changes are published in the Texas Register, the public will have 45 days to submit any comments on the proposed rule changes. A brief description of the proposed changes are; 1) All dairy breed cattle in Texas must be identified with an official identification tag; 2) All sexually intact dairy cattle two months of age or older may enter the state provided they are officially identified and accompanied by a certificate that they were negative to an official TB test prior to 60
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Manager's Update
John Cowan

Johne's Disease: *Research shows it might be time for another look*

By Scott Opitz

It may be time to take a fresh look at Johne's Disease. Ongoing research by Texas Cooperative Extension and Texas A&M University is showing large differences in productive life and milk production in cows that test negative for Johne's Disease versus cows that test positive at any time in their life.

Productive life is 359 days longer and more than three pounds of milk per day more for the cows that were negative through their life in the herd.

The test used in the research is the blood ELISA, but a milk ELISA test recently was approved by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The correlation between the blood and milk ELISA is reported to be high and has been used extensively in the Midwest and Canada for several years.

Antel Bio in Michigan will run the test in batches of 60 samples. More information is available on its Web site at AntelBio.com.

Texas Dairy Herd Improvement Association (DHIA) is also running the Antel Bio test in its lab in Stephenville. If you are already using DHIA services, a major advantage is that they can use the sample that you already are taking. You can test

the entire herd at one time or you can choose the cows to test each month.

The cost at either lab is \$6 per sample.

It is becoming clearer that Johne's Disease is a problem that needs to be dealt with. Considering the economic impact in dairy cattle and the lingering concerns over human health, it is time to eradicate Johne's Disease in our herds. With current tests available, that goal can be obtained.

Dairy markets, on which we all rely to make a living, may hang in the balance. ■

Action winding down at the Capitol

By Shayne Woodard

Both time and tempers are growing short at the Capitol as adjournment – May 28 – approaches. Deadlines are starting to kick in. For instance, May 23 is the last day either the House or the Senate can vote out bills. After that, it's just amendments and conference committee reports to consider.

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TAD Board Action

The Texas Association of Dairymen Board of Directors took the following action during its April meeting in Grapevine:

- Granted a leave of absence to Board member David DeJong; Harry DeWit will serve as interim chair of the Legislative Committee.
- Approved a \$500 donation to the 2007 Plainview Milk Fest.
- Approved a \$300 sponsorship for the Texas Cooperative Extension Specialist annual meeting in August.
- Approved a \$500 donation for the Family Land Heritage Ceremony to be held June 8 by the Texas Department of Agriculture.
- Voted to support a proposed rule change under consideration by the Texas Animal Health Commission that will address TB testing of animals in Texas.
- Heard a report about TAD's involvement in organizing a joint livestock and university summit to be held in the fall in Amarillo.
- Heard a report about TAD's involvement in a project in conjunction with Dairy Producers of New Mexico and cooperative extension agents in Texas and New Mexico which would generate data on dairy water usage. ■

Study pinpoints E.coli sources

A research program that uses DNA fingerprinting to determine the source of E. coli in Texas waterways won this year's Environmental Excellence Award in Agriculture from the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality.

The research found that wildlife fecal matter was the most likely source of the bacteria in surface waters they tested. Fecal matter from cattle was the second-most likely source of contamination, followed by that of humans.

The research collected water from Lake Waco, Belton Lake, the Upper and Lower San Antonio River, Salada Creek, Leon River and Peach Creek – all of which had shown high levels of E. coli bacteria associated with fecal pollution, the TCEQ noted.

Information about the research program can be found at <http://elpaso.tamu.edu/Research/award.htm>.



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days to entry; 3) Dairy cattle delivered to an approved feedlot for feeding for slaughter by the owner or consigned there and accompanied by certificate of veterinary inspection with a entry permit issued by the TAHC are exempt from testing unless from a restricted herd; and 4) All “m” branded steers, which are recognized as potential rodeo and/or roping stock, imported into Texas shall be accompanied by a certificate of veterinary inspection which indicates the animals tested negative for TB within 12 months prior to entry into the state.

TAHC staff investigations suggest that animals exposed to bovine TB may have commingled with Texas herds and now pose a threat to Texas' accredited free status.

Feds extend NMP due date – what about Texas?

On another issue in Austin, TAD is working diligently for Texas dairymen on environmental regulations. Currently, myself and a group of livestock representatives are working with Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) staff to develop an interim agreement that will provide dairy producers operating under a Texas General CAFO permit compliance for the July 31 requirement of a Nutrient Management Plan.

Federal EPA published proposed rules on May 10 that would extend the due date from July 31, 2007, to Feb. 27, 2009. However this proposed rule adoption does not affect Texas CAFO's operating under a General Permit.

Texas law mandates a July 31, 2007, due date, which is why we are working hard to intercede at TCEQ with an interim agreement. We argue your general permit already contains the essential elements of a nutrient management plan and should satisfy compliance until the EPA finally defines for states what it wants the NMP to include. ■

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During these final days of session, the most important thing is to watch for problems – intentional or not – to sneak into bills through amendments.

While no pending bills directly threaten the dairy industry, we are closely monitoring bills to keep them “problem free.” I'll have a final legislative wrap up in the next newsletter. ■