

Bovine Tuberculosis (TB) Confirmed in a Beef Cattle Herd in British Columbia

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has confirmed the presence of bovine tuberculosis (TB) in a bull from a beef cattle herd located in the interior of central British Columbia (B.C.).

CFIA inspectors found a suspicious lesion during routine post mortem inspection when the bull was slaughtered and collected tissues for diagnostic testing. The CFIA Ottawa Laboratory has confirmed the presence of *Mycobacterium bovis*, the cause of bovine TB, in the tissues from this bull.

With the assistance of Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA) records, the CFIA traced the life-line of the infected bull. The animal was born on a farm in central Alberta, from where it was sold to the farm in central B.C. The bull resided on this farm for more than a year, prior to being sold at an auction market in central Alberta in August 2007, where it was purchased by a slaughter buyer and transported to Quebec for slaughter.

All animals that are susceptible to bovine TB on both farms where this bull had resided were immediately placed under quarantine to prevent further spread of any bovine TB infection that may still be present on these farms.

Bovine TB is a reportable disease under the Health of Animals Act and Regulations and Canada follows a strict surveillance and eradication program for this disease. Under the National Bovine TB Eradication Program, whenever the infection is confirmed in a herd of cattle, farmed bison, or farmed cervids (elk and deer), the CFIA institutes disease eradication measures that include the destruction of all exposed susceptible animals. This involves those animals that are still present on the infected farm as well as those that were removed from the farm prior to the infection being detected.

Once it was established that the infected bull had resided on the B.C. farm for a significant period of time, this farm was declared to be a TB-infected place. The CFIA is proceeding to implement disease eradication measures on this farm. A comprehensive epidemiological investigation has been initiated on this farm to trace all livestock movements onto and off of the premises in order to identify any possible spread of the disease as well as to investigate the source of the infection. This investigation will also determine which animals currently on the farm may have been exposed to the infection. Arrangements are being made for the humane slaughter/destruction and disposal of all exposed animals on the B.C. farm and the payment of compensation to the owner.

The Alberta farm where this bull was born resided for the first part of its life remains under quarantine. The CFIA will conduct TB tests and carry out a detailed epidemiological investigation in order to determine whether the bull acquired the TB infection while it was on this farm.

The infected bull was one of a group of 382 cattle that were removed from the B.C. farm in August 2007. The CFIA is tracing the current herds of residence of the 381 other cattle in this group and placing these herds under quarantine to restrict movements until the following steps are completed. These cattle purchased from the B.C. farm are considered to be exposed trace-out cattle. Arrangements are being made to slaughter these cattle, with compensation paid where applicable. These cattle will be subjected to detailed necropsies and tissue samples will be examined for evidence of bovine TB infection. The herds in which these exposed trace-out cattle reside will also undergo precautionary TB testing. Provided that no evidence of bovine TB is found, the movement restriction quarantines will be removed from these herds.

If the investigation finds that exposed animals have been exported from Canada , the animal health authorities in the country of destination will be notified.

Bovine TB has not been detected in any livestock in B.C. since 1990, when it was found in a herd of farmed deer. The last confirmed case of bovine TB in cattle in B.C. occurred in 1976, and the last case reported in cattle anywhere in Canada occurred in 2004 in Manitoba .

DNA analysis of the organism indicates that it is not the strain of bovine TB that has occurred in cattle and wildlife in Manitoba in recent years.

The meat from the index bull, as well as meat from other cattle that were in contact with the bull, is safe for human consumption. The TB lesion was confined to a single lymph node in the jaw area. The affected lymph node and all potentially contaminated tissues were identified through inspection and removed before the remainder of the carcass was approved.

Sporadic cases of bovine TB are expected to occur during the final stages of an eradication program due to the extremely long incubation period for this disease and the presence of latent undetectable infection in some animals.

For the purposes of both domestic and international trade in animals and animal products, the TB-free status of Canada and B.C. is not affected by this finding at this time. Because TB outbreaks in Canada are uncommon, and immediate control and eradication measures are taken, Canada continues to be considered TB-free under the international standards set by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE).

Bovine TB can affect humans. As the investigation identifies persons who may have been exposed to the disease, the appropriate public health officials will be notified, and those persons will be referred to their physician and to public health authorities for follow-up.

The CFIA will provide updates as the investigation progresses and significant new information becomes available.

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