

Brucellosis Regulation Changes in Texas' Quest for Class Free

In the race for class free status in the cattle brucellosis program, Texas is sprinting toward the finish line with 37 herds quarantined as of September 1995.

Recently, the Texas Animal Health Commissioners (TAHC) enacted several regulations effective Oct. 15, to enhance eradication efforts:

False-positive test results occur more often when the brucellosis card test is used, resulting in frustration, long follow-ups and herd owner frustration. The TAHC urges producers and practitioners to send blood samples directly to the state-federal laboratory, foregoing the card test procedure. In the future, only livestock market veterinarians will be permitted to maintain supplies of the brucellosis card test, for market use.

TAHC field personnel will contact card-test approved veterinarians to inventory and collect unused card test kit and supplies. When a producer demands a card test for a herd, supplies will be delivered by TAHC personnel to the approved practitioner, who may run the test at the farm, ranch, clinic or other convenient location. A two-day notice is needed to accommodate the delivery request.

- Texas' official calfhood vaccination age for dairy and beef heifers is between four and 10 months, down from the four- to 12-month age limit. This will reduce the number of heifers vaccinated over-age or when pregnant, which also can cause false-positive test results when the animals become test-eligible.
- Non-vaccinated heifers in "priority herds" will be tested at four months of age. Priority herds are those from which an infected cow has been identified, an infected herd, or an adjacent herd.
- Brucellosis reactors may be sold for slaughter through a livestock market, only if they present no exposure potential at the concentration point. To prevent disease spread, reactors are to be sold directly to slaughter if they are more than five months pregnant and could abort at the market, or if they have a discharge, clue to recent calving or abortion.
- For infected herds detected after Oct. 15, TAHC commissioners lengthened the brucellosis herd quarantine period

to one year, but dropped the post-quarantine herd test requirement. The commissioners altered the regulation, because infection has been detected in three to four percent of herds tested post-quarantine. Herds will be released from quarantine after three consecutive negative herd tests. The second negative test must be at least 120 days after the final reactor is removed from the herd. The third negative test must be at least 12 months after the final reactor is removed.

Herds already under quarantine before Oct. 15 will remain under the former regulation. They will be released after two negative tests, with a post-quarantine test 12 months later.

- To obtain a quarantine release in infected herds detected after Oct. 15, the herd owner must have all test-eligible

cattle retested, including units not under quarantine (unless exempted by a designated brucellosis epidemiologist). This retest can be conducted at least six months after the final reactor is removed from the quarantined unit. This test, with the third negative test of the quarantined unit, can apply toward brucellosis-free certification.

For improved disease surveillance, TAHC commissioners require a test on adult cattle being shipped to Mexico for slaughter. Test-eligible cattle are to have a negative brucellosis test within 30 days prior to leaving the state, with test results recorded on the certificate of veterinary inspection. Exempt are steers, spayed heifers, under age heifers and feedlot finished bulls.

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Misconceptions About Parasite Control Reduce Producer Profits

David Bransby, D.V.M., forage and livestock specialist at Auburn University, says his experience has found that these are the top six misconceptions of cattle parasite control held by producers:

1. **Cattle in poor condition will benefit most from deworming.** "We've found that to be totally wrong," Bransby says. "Response to deworming is equal or larger and often quicker—if cattle are on a good plane of nutrition. The difference in weight gain shows up first, and that's what affects the pocketbook."
2. **Worms are more of a problem when cattle are grazed at high stocking rates.** The improved weight gain in response to deworming is just as large at low stocking rates as it is at high rates, says Bransby. Producers need to keep in mind that in many cases high stocking rates increase the absolute numbers of parasites that animals are exposed to; in some high stocking situations deworming needs to occur several times per year to maximize gains.
6. **Producers can usually see if worms are hurting their cattle.** Cattle producers need to keep in mind that by the time parasite infections are visibly obvious, animals have probably been less efficient and gaining less for quite some time, says Bransby.
4. **Cattle with worms eat more.** Actually, they don't eat as much, Bransby notes, since parasitic infections have been shown to decrease appetite. Dewormed cattle eat more, and their feed efficiency improves. Bransby warns, however, that dewormed cattle need adequate forage for their increased appetite and gains, or producers won't see as much advantage from treatment.
5. You can "clean up" a pasture. "That's highly unlikely," Bransby says. "Researchers kept cattle off pastures for as long as two years at Auburn before treating them for parasites and returning them to the pasture. The cattle were re-infected within 56 days," Bransby points out. The best way to help prevent parasite loads on pastures is to follow a regular cattle deworming program. This means treating about twice a year in the northern climates and at least three times a year in southern climates.
6. **Rotational grazing controls worms.** This also is a misconception. "In my opinion, rotational grazing may even increase the need for deworming," Bransby says. This happens because worm larvae crawl into the ground and can exist there for 18 months or longer. Also, the larvae usually don't move very far from the ground because they have to have a film of water in which to move. Cattle in a rotational grazing program tend to eat closer to the ground and closer to the manure. Bransby says larvae usually move only six to 18 inches from the manure. Cattle in a continuous-grazing system probably would reject the spot where larvae are most likely to be, but cattle in a rotational system may not have that choice.