

Attention Cattle Producers and Veterinarians!

Are you moving cattle interstate, planning a dairy sale, or simply testing your herd for Bovine Tuberculosis? If so, there are some important updates that you should be aware of in the event of a Caudal Fold Test (CFT) responder. In the past, WSDA field veterinarians were called upon to confirm any positive CFT results by using the Bovine Interferon Gamma Assay (Bovigam® blood test) or Comparative Cervical Test (CCT). Traditionally, the blood test was considered a quick and efficient way to conduct confirmatory TB testing, as it involved one trip to the farm, minimal animal restraint, and timely laboratory results.

However, on May 12, 2017, USDA Veterinary Services temporarily suspended the use of the Bovine Interferon Gamma Assay due to inconsistent results and a variety of other factors (VS Guidance 6708.1). Because of this, WSDA veterinarians must use the Comparative Cervical Test (CCT) to determine the TB status of a herd until further notice.

The CCT must be conducted within 10 days of your veterinarian's initial CFT injection, or after 60 days. The CCT requires that animals be restrained properly, as the procedure involves clipping two spots on the animal's neck, measuring skin thickness with calipers, and injecting two types of tuberculin. Three days later (72 +/- 6 hours), the skin thickness at the two sites is measured and the reactions are compared. Then, results are plotted on a graph to determine the TB status of the animal. As one can see, this process is much more involved than simply drawing a tube of blood and sending it to the lab. Forward planning is absolutely essential!

In the event that large herds are TB tested at once, one can expect that 1-5% will be responders. This will result in a Hold Order being placed on the farm to restrict animal movement and contain the possible spread of disease. After this, an enormous amount of planning and interagency coordination is required to provide personnel, equipment, and supplies for further testing. This process can take several weeks, especially if a TB suspect or reactor is found. Those animals will require euthanasia, necropsy, examination of tissues under the microscope, and culture.

With all this in mind, how can you help streamline this process and ensure cattle get on their way? Here are some tips:

1. When planning Bovine TB testing with your veterinarian, allow at least 2-3 weeks for any follow-up testing by regulatory personnel. Once a TB responder is identified via the CFT, no animals will be allowed to leave the premise until herd status can be determined. It doesn't matter if the number of animals tested is large or small; the process will take time.
2. Have your veterinarian contact the WSDA field veterinarian in their region as soon as TB testing is on your calendar. Because the field veterinarians have a variety of responsibilities within their regions, timely notice is much appreciated. A list of WSDA field veterinarians, their regions, and contact information can be found at: <http://agr.wa.gov/FoodAnimal/AnimalHealth/ContactUs.aspx>
3. Do not assume there won't be TB responders when conducting herd testing. A common mistake is to have cattle transport trucks arrive at the conclusion of your veterinarian's initial testing. This can be very costly and frustrating for the producer when the cattle are not permitted to load due to a Hold Order.

Do you have more questions? Please feel free to contact the Animal Health Program at (360) 902-1878, or your WSDA field veterinarian for further assistance. We are happy to help!