

# Bovine Tuberculosis

## Investigation – October 2018



## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What is bovine tuberculosis (TB)?

Bovine TB is a contagious, chronic, bacterial disease caused by *Mycobacterium bovis* (*M. bovis*) that usually originates in cattle. The infection commonly involves the lungs, but may spread to other organs. Animals often do not show signs until the infection has reached an advanced stage. Bovine TB can spread between cattle and humans. Other livestock can be infected, including elk, deer, bison, goats, and swine.

### 2. How was bovine TB found in Wisconsin?

In late September 2018, U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) meat inspectors collected samples for TB testing from a carcass inspected during a routine slaughter inspection. The samples were submitted to the National Veterinary Services Laboratory (NVSL) where they were confirmed positive for bovine TB. Through animal identification records the carcass was traced back to a dairy herd in Dane County that the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection (DATCP) immediately quarantined. State and federal staff tested the entire herd for bovine TB in October.

### 3. Where is the affected herd?

The affected herd is located in Dane County. The herd is under quarantine preventing any animals from moving on or off of the farm. State animal health officials are working with USDA and the herd owner to investigate the extent of the disease.

### 4. Where did TB come from?

Initial data from the carcass at slaughter confirmed that the strain of bovine TB matched the strain for an individual who worked on the farm in 2015. That individual completed treatment for TB and did not return to the farm. This data is preliminary and

complete sample analysis for the herd is ongoing to confirm all possible sources of infection.

More information about human TB is available on the Department of Health Services website at <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/tb/index.htm>.

### 5. How will Wisconsin's TB-free status be affected?

The U.S. has nearly eliminated bovine TB due to a USDA cooperative eradication campaign. Wisconsin has been certified as TB-free since 1980. There is no immediate affect to Wisconsin's status. A thorough investigation of an outbreak helps Wisconsin maintain its TB-free status with USDA.

### 6. How will this affect the movement of livestock?

Routine movement of livestock will not be impacted for herds that are not involved in a quarantine or trace investigation. A trace investigation looks for the source of infection and potential spread into herds that are adjacent to, have sold to, or purchased from the affected herd.

The Division of Animal Health continues to advise livestock owners to contact the state of destination for import requirements prior to interstate movements.

### 7. How are animals tested for TB?

In cattle, the standard method for detection of bovine TB in live animals is the tuberculin skin test, performed by a licensed, accredited, and TB-certified veterinarian. Secondary skin testing is conducted by regulatory veterinarians on animals that respond to initial skin tests. Animals that test positive on secondary skin testing require further

testing and may need to be slaughtered to determine if they are infected.

Additional testing criteria may be applied to herd testing during a bovine TB investigation. For the affected Dane County herd, all animals that tested positive on the initial skin test will be euthanized or slaughtered.



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**8. Is there a vaccine for bovine TB?**

No. There is no commercially available licensed vaccine against bovine TB in the U.S.

**9. Is there a food safety risk?**

No. Pasteurized milk continues to be safe to consume. The pasteurization process, which destroys disease-causing organisms in milk by rapidly heating and then cooling the milk, eliminates the disease from milk and milk products.

Food safety laws prevent meat from infected animals from entering the food chain. State and federal inspectors at slaughter plants evaluate live animals and animal products for signs or symptoms of disease and remove any from entering food production.

**10. Where can I get more information?**

More information about bovine TB can be found through the following resources:

- Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection's website:  
[https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs\\_Services/Tuberculosis.aspx](https://datcp.wi.gov/Pages/Programs_Services/Tuberculosis.aspx)
  - Bovine Tuberculosis in Animals and Humans brochure:  
<https://datcp.wi.gov/Documents/BovineTB.pdf>
- USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services website:  
<https://www.aphis.usda.gov/aphis/ourfocus/animalhealth/animal-disease-information/cattle-disease-information/national-tuberculosis-eradication-program>
  - Preventing Bovine TB fact sheet:  
[https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal\\_health/content/printable\\_version/faq\\_tb\\_free\\_herds.pdf](https://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/content/printable_version/faq_tb_free_herds.pdf)