

Q's & A's About the Bovine Tuberculosis Emergency Declaration

Q. What is bovine tuberculosis (TB)?

A. Bovine TB is a chronic debilitating disease caused by *Mycobacterium bovis*. The disease primarily affects cattle but can be transmitted to humans and other animals.

Q. What action is the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) taking regarding TB in cattle?

A. Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman declared an emergency October 17, 2000, under which he authorized the transfer of \$44,196,876 from emergency contingency funds to USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) to expand the TB eradication program in the United States.

Q. Why did USDA declare an emergency?

A. Scientific analysis has recently identified significant TB threats that could lead to the spread of the disease in the United States and compromise international and domestic trade in U.S. animals and animal products. These outcomes would threaten producers with losses and consumers with price increases. APHIS does not have the funds in its regular appropriations to deal quickly and effectively with the emerging TB threat; therefore, an emergency was declared to make the funding available.

Q. What are these threats?

A. APHIS has identified four main TB threats. They are:

1. TB is being transmitted to livestock from infected wildlife, especially free-ranging deer.

Scientific evidence suggests that infected free-ranging deer are transmitting the disease to nearby cattle. Such transmission was recently identified in Michigan, with 11 cattle herds detected as being affected with TB from infection in wildlife, primarily from free-ranging deer. Livestock can become infected through sharing a common watering place contaminated with saliva and other discharges from infected deer. Despite efforts by the State of Michigan to contain TB-infected wildlife to limited areas, program officials in Michigan subsequently

discovered infected deer 75 miles outside the containment zone. This situation is threatening all interstate movement of cattle from Michigan due to concerns that cattle in that State might be exposed to infected deer or other infected cattle.

2. Transmission of TB from infected captive deer and elk threatens U.S. cattle and other livestock.

Infected captive deer and elk, in turn, pose a threat to cattle and other livestock. It is not currently known how prevalent TB is in captive cervids, because APHIS does not have the resources to conduct adequate surveillance of captive cervids.

3. The U.S. cattle population is being threatened by recurring TB infection of dairy herds in the El Paso, TX, area.

Recent studies have indicated that the greatest risk of reinfection in the El Paso area comes from the U.S. dairy herds' proximity to TB-infected dairy herds in Juarez, Mexico. Despite ongoing testing of large dairy herds in the El Paso area and removal of TB-infected animals from those herds, reinfection of U.S. dairy herds in that area continues to occur. Although depopulation of dairy herds in the El Paso area along the U.S./Mexican border is the most dependable method of protecting U.S. livestock from recurring TB infection in that area of Texas, depopulation of large U.S. dairy herds has not been a viable option because APHIS has lacked the resources to pay indemnity for depopulated herds.

4. A decline in testing for TB in recent years also threatens to allow the spread of the disease in the United States.

As the number of TB-free States has increased, limitations on Federal resources have in many cases led USDA inspectors to take samples only from those animals exhibiting obvious signs of TB. The number of samples taken from cattle at slaughter for testing for TB has decreased from approximately 4,000 in 1995 to 900 in 1999. However, APHIS estimates that 10,000 sample submissions are needed each year to adequately survey the U.S. cattle population for TB. APHIS needs additional funds both to provide assistance in taking the number of samples at slaughter necessary for adequate surveillance and to increase testing capacity at the APHIS' National Veterinary Services Laboratories.

Q. How will USDA address these threats?

A. APHIS will deal with each of these threats in the following fashion.

1. TB is being transmitted to livestock from infected wildlife, especially free-ranging deer.

This threat pertains to Michigan. TB was most likely introduced to wild deer populations through contact with infected cattle. APHIS and the State of Michigan will test every cow in Michigan for TB. Once the disease is eradicated in domestic Michigan cattle, the disease can be controlled in wildlife by many management practices such as banning supplemental feeding and controlling deer population densities. APHIS will aid Michigan with increased monitoring and surveillance of the wildlife.

2. Transmission of TB from infected captive deer and elk threatens U.S. cattle and other livestock.

APHIS will enhance monitoring and surveillance practices nationally of captive cervids like deer and elk. APHIS will work with States to find and remove affected herds and establish a known level of risk of this disease for our national and international trading partners.

3. The U.S. cattle population is being threatened by recurring TB infection of dairy herds in the El Paso, TX, area.

APHIS and the State of Texas will create a buffer zone in the El Paso area to protect the U.S. cattle population from the suspected source of infection from Mexico. Existing dairy producers in that buffer zone will be offered a voluntary buyout by USDA.

4. A decline in testing for TB in recent years also threatens to allow the spread of the disease in the United States.

APHIS will enhance surveillance of TB across the country and review all State programs and regulations for TB reporting. APHIS will enhance surveillance at major slaughter plants including monitoring cervid slaughter at specialty plants not inspected by Federal and State meat inspectors. Wild deer and elk will be tested through a hunter submission program. APHIS will also increase the number of herds under disease-free certification in each State that must be tested for TB and enhance reporting procedures for TB surveillance activities in all States.

Q. How will the money be used?

A. The money will be used to improve Federal diagnostic capabilities and national surveillance for TB; for payment of indemnity for the depopulation of herds affected with TB or at high risk for recurrence of the disease; to establish identification requirements for animals imported into the United States for feeding and slaughter; to assist in eradicating TB from foreign areas adjacent to the United States that are at high risk for the disease; and to research, control, and survey for TB in wildlife, captive cervids, and zoos in the United States.

Q. What is the breakdown of expenditures?

A. This is how the money will be spent: \$29,582,000 will go for insurance claims and indemnities, of which \$25,718,000 will be for the buyout of ranches in the El Paso area: \$7,598,859 for surveillance; \$5,236,230 on diagnostics; \$729,952 for import requirements; and \$1,049,835 for wildlife management. This is the first year of funding for what will be a 4-year process to eliminate all TB from cattle, bison, and captive deer and elk herds in the United States.

Q. Prior to this emergency, what was USDA doing?

A. Through APHIS, USDA works cooperatively with the national livestock industry and State animal health agencies to eradicate TB from domestic livestock in the United States and, through continued monitoring and surveillance, to prevent its recurrence.

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