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[Canadian Food Inspection Agency](#)[Home](#) → [Animals](#) → [Chief Veterinary Officer](#)→ [CVO \(Chief Veterinary Officer\) Statements](#) → 2018-11-19

Bovine tuberculosis investigation in British Columbia

November 19, 2018

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has launched an investigation into a case of bovine tuberculosis (bovine TB) in British Columbia.

Bovine TB is a reportable disease in Canada and has been subject to a mandatory national eradication program since 1923. While Canada is considered to be officially free of bovine TB today, isolated cases may occur. There is no risk to the food supply or to human health from this case. Human cases of bovine TB are very rare. Exposure can only occur through the passage of fluids from an animal to an open skin sore, extended close contact with an animal with active respiratory TB or drinking unpasteurized milk from an infected animal.

Overview

On October 26, 2018, a mature beef cow was presented for slaughter at a federally registered facility. Post-mortem examination of the animal revealed the presence of granulomatous lesions in the mediastinal lymph nodes, lungs and liver. The carcass was condemned, and no portions of the animal entered the food chain.

All animals sent to federally registered slaughter establishments are inspected to ensure that they are handled humanely and meet all regulatory requirements and laws.

Samples were shipped to the [CFIA's Ottawa Laboratory–Fallowfield](#) on October 29, 2018, and arrived October 31, 2018. On November 9, 2018, laboratory testing results confirmed a case of bovine TB. The animal was traced to a farm in the southern interior of British Columbia.

The CFIA is continuing to work closely with the producers, industry associations, and provincial and federal agricultural and health authorities throughout the investigation.

This finding should not affect Canada's current international status in which all provinces are considered bovine TB-free. This status supports international trade for Canada's beef industry.

Process and next steps

In all cases where federally regulated diseases are suspected or confirmed, the goal is to take appropriate and prudent control measures while minimizing disruptions to producers.

During a bovine TB investigation, quarantines and movement restrictions are placed on any implicated animals. Testing, humane destruction, and disposal are carried out as required.

The CFIA is in the very early stages of its investigation. It has begun tracing movements of the animal in the infected herd to try to identify the source and any potential spread of the disease. This involves identifying all herds that have come in contact with the infected animal during its life. The CFIA has also begun testing to identify the strain of the bacterium as this may inform if there are connections to previous cases. As the investigation proceeds, the CFIA will trace the movement of animals to and from the infected herd during the past five years to identify and eliminate the source and any potential spread of the disease. Because the investigation is in the early stages, the exact number of herds involved and the time to complete the investigation are not yet known.

Detailed information on bovine tuberculosis and what can be expected during an investigation is available on the CFIA website. Investigation updates will be posted as more information becomes available.

Compensation

Producers are eligible for compensation for any animals ordered destroyed by the CFIA as part of this investigation.

In addition, under the Canadian Agricultural Partnership, there is a suite of business risk management (BRM) programs available, including AgriInvest and AgriStability, to help farmers manage risk due to severe market volatility and disaster situations that are largely beyond their capacity to manage. Cash advances of up to \$400,000 are also available through the Advance Payments Program. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada is working with the B.C. provincial government, industry and producers to assess the financial impact on farm operations and to respond appropriately to meet the needs of producers.

A collaborative approach

Disease investigations require a great deal of cooperation and collaboration.

Affected producers and industry associations, as well as federal and provincial departments, are cooperating in the ongoing investigation. The common goal is to protect human health, protect the health of Canadian livestock and, in the process, maintain market access.

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Date modified:

2018-11-19