



Furthering Families

What are my options if I have a Bovine TB reactor animal?

Once it has been established that a farm has a Bovine TB (tuberculosis) positive animal there are two options available to farmers: test and remove or whole herd depopulation. Both of these options have financial implications.

What are my options? (According to the Michigan Department of Agriculture's Producer's Guide to TB Testing.)

1 - Test and Remove

A test and remove program for a bovine TB infected herd requires that a farm remain under quarantine for an extended period of time until all testing reveals a bovine TB-negative herd. Each time an animal reacts to a comparative cervical tuberculin (CCT) test on the farm, it is immediately removed and the testing process must start all over again. The herd will remain under quarantine when a positive animal is found. The herd will not be re-tested until 60 days after removal of the positive animal. No animals are allowed to leave or enter the farm without prior written permission by the Michigan Department of Agriculture (MDA). If no positive animals are found during further testing, the quarantine may be removed from the farm. This process requires approximately six whole herd tests that may take 24 or more months providing no additional infected animals are found. Yearly tests may be required on the herd for five years once the quarantine is removed. Dairy herds in the test and remove plan may sell milk while under quarantine if all bovine TB reactors have been removed from the farm.

2 - Depopulation

Farmers are encouraged to consider whole herd depopulation. The procedure for testing and removal of infected animals can be costly and may cause long-term consequences for farm operations. Depopulation, as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) *Bovine TB Eradication Uniform Methods and Rules*, is the destruction of all livestock exposed to bovine tuberculosis in the herd before any restocking of the site with cattle, captive cervids (deer, elk, moose, etc.), bison or goats.

When the owner chooses to depopulate, MDA purchases all livestock from the producer. The livestock are removed from the property and the farm is disinfected. It may be repopulated as soon as a USDA Designated Tuberculosis Epidemiologist

determines that the location is clean and there is no risk of re-infection, or the farm may be repopulated one year after the removal of the animals without a USDA epidemiologist.

What are the financial differences between the two options?

Test and Remove

The length of the test and remove process can take an extremely long time which can affect your business. No animals are permitted to leave the herd while the farm is quarantined. In addition, there is no guarantee that you will not have to depopulate the whole herd.

Once the test and remove program is started, the herd is put on a plan for testing every 60 to 90 days. If a reactor shows up during that time, the process has to be restarted. The length of time that a herd must be reaction-free before the quarantine is lifted depends on the herd plan. Each case is handled on an individual farm-by-farm basis.

During this time no income can be gained from the sale of animals from the herd. For dairy cattle or goats, the milk may be sold after all reactor animals have been removed from the farm. Farms depending on the sale of milk for income may not experience as great an income loss as those farms that depend on the breeding and selling of the animals.

Depopulation

If a new herd is started the same year you depopulated, you will be given a testing regimen that includes a test within 30 days of repopulation with a retest in six months. After that, testing may continue every year after that. If you start a new herd on your farm one

year or more after depopulation, the farm will not be put on a testing regimen.

The depopulation program may help you may recover more financially from your herd. The USDA appraises the value of the herd through contracting certified appraisers who use the Uniform Standards of Professional Appraisal Practices (USPAP). You are given a lump sum payment for the herd. The payment will be tax-free if you decide to reinvest the money into a “like kind” investment (i.e., a new herd) within two years from depopulation. However, you will have to pay taxes on the money if you decide to reinvest the money in something that is not a “like kind” investment.

What if I don't want to get back into the farming business? What about retirement?

If you are contemplating retirement and want to know if you are ready to make that next step, check out this Purdue University Extension website for more information: <http://www/ces.purdue.edu/farmretirement>.

Where can I get additional information if I have questions?

First, contact your accredited testing veterinarian. The testing veterinarian should be able to answer many questions you may have on the regulations about testing. If you need additional information, contact the Bovine TB Coordinator at the Michigan Department of Agriculture at (517) 241-2460.

References: “Producer’s Guide to TB Testing” Michigan Department of Agriculture, 2002.

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