



Quality Watch

By Gary Trimmer

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Joint TB Meeting Helps Producers Voice Concerns, Learn About Eradication Plan

In early August, beef and dairy producers located in Northern Michigan had the unique opportunity to meet with the leaders of United States Department of Agriculture-APHIS, Michigan Department of Agriculture and Michigan Department of Natural Resources to discuss the current TB situation in Michigan. The meeting, hosted and led by Michigan Farm Bureau, gave producers the opportunity to voice their concerns and opinions about Michigan's Bovine TB eradication program.

The meeting was primarily held for the benefit of producers located in the TB modified accredited zone, several of which are MMPA members. During the meeting, producers voiced their frustrations with the lack of progress being made in eradicating Bovine TB in Michigan and noted their concerns about the increased requirements being placed on producers through the TB eradication program.

Dr. Clifford, head of USDA-APHIS, pointed out that it is the intent to eradicate TB in both cattle and deer populations. He said that USDA must manage and maintain their program to include requirements of international standards. That means Michigan must adhere to those standards, in order to allow international marketing of Michigan products. Dr. Clifford pointed out that the TB eradication process would not be a short-term project. It will take at least 5-10 additional

years to achieve eradication of the disease in Michigan with most agreeing that it will likely be 10 or more years. They also noted that there must be no TB detected in cattle in a zone for 5 years before that zone can move to the next TB accreditation level.

Earlier this year, USDA cited MDA for 79 different areas that needed prompt improvement in order to maintain the split state status. One deviation was the lack of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between USDA and MDA. That major hurdle has been overcome and the MOU was signed on June 19, 2007, ahead of schedule. MDA is making significant progress toward meeting and implementing all the requirements of the MOU.

Dr. John Tilden, newly appointed to lead Michigan's state TB program, outlined some new requirements and areas that need tightening in Michigan:

- Development and implementation of wildlife risk mitigation plans for farms in the modified accredited zone. Those plans call for restricting deer access to cattle, and eliminating deer accessibility to cattle feed and feeding areas. These plans are currently being developed and will be implemented over the next couple of years.

- Utilization of cattle movement certificates when moving cattle across zones. Cattle haulers must have a certificate provided by MDA at all times when crossing

zones. Please note the question and answer FAQ section provided by MDA on page 14 of this issue.

- Monitoring cattle movement across the Mackinac Bridge. USDA made it clear that the bridge monitoring must be enhanced in order for Wisconsin to recognize Michigan's Upper Peninsula TB free status.

Other areas that will need to be improved are: the need for better cattle identification; better herd inventories, closer monitoring of livestock haulers as well as MDA's need to improve relaying information to producers.

Producers attending the meeting made it clear to USDA, MDA and DNR that producers need to be a part of the solution and be solicited for input in the decision making process. They also noted the need to continue reducing the deer population and to increase penalties for individuals that are feeding and

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baiting deer. DNR officials pointed out that legislative action must be taken to increase penalties for feeding and baiting deer.

Although not mentioned at the Gaylord meeting, another reason it is important for MDA to follow the TB eradication MOU is that the Pasteurized Milk Ordinance (PMO) states that all milk shipped interstate must be from herds that are certified TB free or are in a TB free zone. If the state or zone becomes non-certified, the PMO requires the state to follow a strict eradication protocol program. Since Michigan has such a program in place and is following it, the PMO allows continued movement of Grade A milk across state lines. If the MOU is not followed, the FDA can make the determination that Michigan does not have an effective program in place and we will lose the

ability to move Grade A milk and milk products across state lines. For those reasons and many others, it is critical that Michigan implement the rules established with USDA in the MOU in order for Michigan's dairy industry to maintain access to markets.

I felt the meeting was productive, allowing producers a chance to voice their opinions and frustrations, as well as giving the government officials the opportunity to explain details of the eradication program. In summary, it will take increased and continuous cooperation between USDA, MDA, DNR and producers over an extended time period for this state to achieve the coveted TB Free status, but I believe it can be done.



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