



Quality Watch

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Michigan TB Update

Discoveries of three TB positive deer this fall have heightened awareness of Michigan's TB issue. Two of the TB positive deer were discovered in Iosco County and one in Shiawassee County—two of which were located outside the state's TB Modified Accredited Zone (MAZ).

The positive TB identification of the single deer located in Shiawassee County raises serious concerns and signals that we need to change our approach in Michigan's TB Eradication Program. Of the two positive deer identified in Iosco County, one was found just outside the MAZ.

All cattle within a 10 mile radius of where any positive deer was harvested will be tested for TB within the next six months. Testing in all three areas has begun. If no positive TB cattle are identified outside the MAZ there will be no change to Michigan's split state status. If three or more cattle herds located outside of the MAZ are identified as TB positive, Michigan's split state status would be in serious jeopardy.

USDA Review

In February, the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) issued another review of Michigan's TB program. As you may recall, last year's USDA review of Michigan's TB eradication program indicated major areas of concern. If those concerns were not addressed Michigan could have lost their split state status.

This year's report shows Michigan has made significant progress in meeting USDA's recommendations and requirements. Under the

leadership of Michigan Department of Agriculture's Dr. John Tilden, significant improvements have been made in Michigan's TB program, allowing the state to continue with the split state status.

The USDA did point out some areas that they are still concerned about, including: reducing deer populations, enforcing feed and baiting bans in the MAZ, providing incentives for farmers to complete Wildlife Risk Mitigation Plans, and moving from random whole herd testing to targeted whole herd testing. The herds in the "potential high risk areas" (the 10 mile radius around the three positive deer) will be counted toward next year's quota of targeted whole herd tests.

MMPA has continually worked with MDA and USDA to provide information to farmers and identify strategies to address these areas of concerns. We will be working with our farmers in the MAZ to implement Wildlife Risk Mitigation Plans. In the future indemnity payments may be contingent upon Wildlife Risk Mitigation Plans being implemented on farms. We will be calling on all farms in the MAZ to work on this program this year.

Baiting Ban

In an attempt to address the deer population and feeding ban, the Michigan Farm Bureau, Michigan Cattlemen's Association and Michigan Milk Producers Association all had the opportunity to testify at the Natural Resource Commission in early March. The message conveyed by all three organizations was clear that Department of Natural Resources (DNR) must find a way to reduce and better

manage the deer population in the state and especially in the MAZ, and in the newly established "high potential risk areas" where the positive deer were found. In addition, the DNR must enforce and pursue increasing penalties for feeding and baiting bans. Any changes to these penalties must be accomplished through legislation since DNR does not have authority to increase fines.

During the Natural Resource Commission meeting we were pleased to learn that the DNR was well aware of the need to reduce the deer population and the need to better enforce feeding bans. In fact, they are more than willing to provide both disease control and crop damage permits to farmers. If farmers are having difficulty obtaining these permits, they should contact DNR Director Rebecca Humphrey's office.

The identification of the three positive deer indicates we may not have made much progress over 10 years with the state's wildlife TB eradication process. As we move ahead, the agriculture industry will work more closely with MDA and USDA, both at State and Federal levels, to develop a program based upon incentives for producers to implement Wildlife Risk Mitigation Plans, follow all recommended procedures such as obtaining movement permits, using electronic RFID identification on all cattle and implementing innovative methods working with local conservation clubs and hunters to reduce deer population in their area.

We will keep you posted as new strategies and programs are developed.