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California's Trichomonosis Control Program: Proposed Changes

Last month we discussed the first three years of the California Trichomonosis Control Program. Despite the overwhelming general support and the acceptance by producers, one problem that has been highlighted is the repeat infections in herds adopting good preventive practices. It is apparent that in some locales herds are being continually re-infected by some neighboring operations. At the time of writing this article, CDFA has opened the comment period for proposed changes to the current regulations. The comment period will end on March the 5th, so individuals should take the opportunity to make any comments to CDFA immediately upon reading this column or reviewing the proposed changes on line. The CCA membership has adopted policy that support these changes and they have been joined by other organizations such as the Farm Bureau. We will review the changes in this column.

There are a number of areas in the control program where changes are proposed: (1) importation of bulls, (2) pasture-to-pasture herds movements, (3) public sale of bulls, (4) sampling by veterinarians, (5) laboratory certification, (6) confirmatory tests of lab results, (7) investigation and mandatory testing of neighboring at-risk herds, and (8) disposition of infected cattle.

What are the proposed regulations for imported bulls? First, bulls 18 months of age or older must have the following:

Official individual animal identification

An interstate entry permit number

A negative Trichomonosis test result (collected after 10 days of sexual rest and within 60 days of entry into California)

A health certificate (Certificate of Veterinary Inspection) which states:

(a) The bull(s) is Trich test negative and have not had sexual contact since their last negative test.

(b) Trichomonosis has not been diagnosed in the herd within the last 24 months.

(c) A bull originating from a herd that has had Trichomonosis diagnosed within the last 24 months must have three (3) negative tests conducted at least 7 days apart and not more than 28 days apart, with the last test conducted within 60 days prior to entry.

These same requirements must also be met by bulls entering California for sales purposes.

What about pasture-to-pasture movements of bulls? Bulls as part of a pasture-to-pasture permitted herd must have one negative test within the 12 months prior to entry. The permit must include the date of the test, negative test results, and the name and contact information of the testing veterinarian.

Are there any exemptions for import testing of bulls? Yes, bulls that are to be used solely of exhibition purposes (rodeo bulls for example) may be exempt from import testing. However, these exhibition bulls must be confined to the location of the exhibition without having access or being allowed to commingle with sexually mature female cattle. Secondly, bulls that are being used solely for artificial insemination and housed under protocols that meet the Certified Semen Services standards may be exempt from the testing requirements. A third possibility is an exemption for bulls consigned directly to slaughter without unloading prior to arrival at the slaughter plant.

What about bulls sold at public auction within California? Bulls 18 months of age or older sold through a public livestock market shall be sold only to slaughter or to a feedlot designated only for slaughter unless accompanied by a negative Trichomonosis test result from a sample taken by a Trichomonosis approved veterinarian within 30 days prior to sale. Additionally, public salesyards shall post a sign saying “All bulls 18 months of age and over sold for breeding must have a negative Trichomonosis test or consigned as slaughter only.”

How is Trichomonosis testing done? Only USDA accredited California licensed veterinarians can take samples from cattle for Trichomonosis testing. These veterinarians must successfully complete a training program approved by CDFA for sampling and handling specimens used in the diagnosis of Trichomonosis. Any testing, reading or diagnosis of Trichomonosis must be performed in an approved laboratory under the direction of a person approved by CDFA to perform these activities. CDFA will also maintain a list of certified veterinarians and approved laboratories. It is important to note that all Trichomonosis tests are official tests and both presumptive and confirmatory tests must be reported.

What will happen when infected cattle are identified? First, the state veterinarian will impose a quarantine on the herd and any Trichomonosis infected cattle will be held on the premises where found and movement may be allowed only under written confirmation by CDFA. Infected cattle can only be moved to slaughter and written confirmation of the slaughter is required. In the infected herd, all herdmate bulls shall be held on the premises until three (3) negative tests are completed and any cattle determined to be infected will be handled as above.

What about neighboring herds that might have been exposed? CDFA veterinarians will conduct an epidemiological evaluation to identify exposed herds. All herdmate bulls in a Trichomonosis exposed herd shall be held on the premises where found until one (1) negative Trichomonosis tests is completed. Any infected cattle will

be handled as in any infected herd. The testing in exposed herds will be at the owner's expense.

If the proposed changes are adopted it will give veterinary professionals the necessary tools to clean up Trichomonosis in a given locale and prevent "spillover" infections from continually occurring. The Trichomonosis control program will be reviewed constantly by CCA and other producer groups. CCA and CDFA welcome all comments and suggestions.

Charles Palmer, DVM, MPVM
Redding District
Animal Health Branch, CDFA

Robert BonDurant, DVM
Department of Population Health and Reproduction
School of Veterinary Medicine
UC Davis

John Maas, DVM, MS, DACVN, DACVIM
Extension Veterinarian
School of Veterinary Medicine
UC Davis