

Market Cattle Testing



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COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY
FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA 58102

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MARKET CATTLE TESTING

WHAT IS MARKET CATTLE TESTING?

This is a method of screening market cattle for brucellosis and tuberculosis. This screening method reduces the need for testing cattle at the farm or ranch. This program was originally designed to meet the needs of cattlemen in range and semi-range areas. However, it is a valuable disease eradication method in non-range areas.

Test results--credited back to herd and county of origin --to maintain area brucellosis certified and tuberculosis accreditation status.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

The program consists of 6 basic steps:

- Breeding cattle over 2 years old that are marketed are identified with a special back-tag at the ranch or farm, or at assembly points on the way to market.
- Blood samples are collected from tagged animals at livestock markets, packing plants, or other designated points.
- Blood samples are then forwarded to a cooperative State-Federal laboratory to be tested for brucellosis.
- Test results are forwarded to disease control officials in the state where the cattle originated.
- At time of slaughter, back tagged animals are examined by trained meat inspectors for lesions of tuberculosis.
- Negative animals are credited to herds and areas of origin. When blood tests indicate infection is present,

state and federal animal disease officials and veterinarians work directly with the owner until the disease is eradicated.

WHAT CATTLE ARE TESTED UNDER THIS PLAN?

Only breeding cattle 2 years or older are backtagged and tested.

WHY AREN'T YOUNGER CATTLE TESTED?

Because older animals in the herd are most likely to be infected.

CAN A COUNTY BE RECERTIFIED FOR BRUCellosIS ON THE BASIS OF MARKET CATTLE TESTING RESULTS?

Yes. For modified certified counties at least 5 per cent of the breeding cows must be backtagged and tested each year. To maintain certified free status, 10 per cent of the breeding cattle must be backtagged and tested annually.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE BACKTAGS?

These tags, made of a tough plastic material, are imprinted with a combination of numbers and letters which identify the state, county and herd of origin of animals shipped to market.

HOW AND WHERE ARE THE TAGS APPLIED TO ANIMALS?

This varies from state to state. In North Dakota, tags are applied at livestock markets or concentration points. A tag is cemented on each animal just back of the shoulder and about 4 inches below the back line. The tags are applied by trained personnel without cost to the owner.

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WHY ARE SOME BACKTAGS YELLOW AND OTHERS WHITE?

Yellow tags are used on dairy cows and blood samples are not collected from them at slaughter. Dairy herds are screen tested for brucellosis 3 times per year with the milk ring test (BRT). Beef type animals are tagged with white tags and blood samples are collected at the time of slaughter.

The entire State was declared Modified Certified January 22, 1965, and 40 counties have attained Brucellosis Free status.

CAN I SHIP TAGGED ANIMALS TO ANY MARKET I CHOOSE?



Yes. All federally inspected packing plants--and many under state and other forms of inspection--are cooperating in the market cattle testing program.

WHO COLLECTS THE BLOOD SAMPLES?

Blood samples will be taken by federal or state meat inspection personnel when animals are sent to these packing plants. In other participating plants, trained personnel will obtain the samples.

WHO MAKES THE ACTUAL BLOOD TEST?

Actual testing will be done by qualified technicians at cooperative state-federal laboratories in all states.

IF REACTORS ARE FOUND AMONG THE ANIMALS TESTED, HOW WILL THEY BE TRACED?

Numbers on the tags you use will be recorded for your herd. Since these numbers are not issued to any other owner, animals bearing a particular number can be traced easily to the state, county and herd where they originated.

WHAT HAPPENS IF REACTORS ARE FOUND AMONG THE COWS I SHIP TO MARKET?

State and federal veterinarians will discuss test results with you and the best ways to remove infection from your herd.

WHAT DO I GAIN BY TAKING PART IN THIS PROGRAM?

By vaccinating your calves and backtagging your market cattle, you can be sure your herd is brucellosis-free. This method of screening your cattle also gives you continuing assurance that brucellosis and/or tuberculosis has not been introduced into your herd. And, if infection is present, it can be located easily and can be eliminated quickly--before it has a chance to spread.

By participating in the market cattle program you can help certify--or recertify--your county without additional on-the-farm or ranch tests, except in known infected herds. This will save time and money, help to establish--or maintain--your area's modified-certified status with less work and cost, and contribute to the eradication of brucellosis. Market cattle testing also can be used to help establish and maintain certified brucellosis-free areas.

IF I PARTICIPATE IN THE MARKET CATTLE TESTING PROGRAM, WILL I HAVE TO HAVE ANIMALS TESTED ON MY FARM OR RANCH ALSO?

No. The only time this would happen would be if reactors were traced to your herd and, after a review of the history of your herd, it was considered to be affected with brucellosis or tuberculosis.

IF I BACKTAG MY CATTLE, DOES THIS ELIMINATE ME FROM ON-THE-RANCH TESTS?

Yes. If not enough cattle are tested through market cattle testing to recertify an area, additional on-the-ranch tests will be conducted on only herds which have not participated in the market cattle testing program.

Information given in this circular was provided by Dr. Dean E. Flagg, North Dakota State Veterinarian, and Dr. G. W. Spangler, Veterinarian In Charge, U.S. Dept. of Agriculture, Bismarck, N. Dak. This circular prepared and distributed by the Cooperative Extension Service, North Dakota State University, Fargo, N. Dak.

THE GOAL FOR STATEWIDE BRUCELLOSIS FREE STATUS IS DEC. 31, 1970.