

UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION - 2007

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 73 APPROVED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON BRUCELLOSIS

SUBJECT MATTER: BRUCELLOSIS IN THE GREATER YELLOWSTONE AREA

DATE: RENO, NEVADA, OCTOBER 18 – 24, 2007

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The state and federal governments and the livestock industries have spent billions of dollars since 1935 to eradicate *Brucella abortus* infection from cattle in the United States (US), and the presence of *B. abortus* in the US has significant economic impact upon the livestock industry and may have an impact on international trade. The efforts to eradicate *B. abortus* are contributing to the national herd becoming free of the disease. The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) supports the efforts of the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA) state and federal agencies in their efforts to prevent exposure of livestock to brucellosis from elk and bison in the GYA and encourages the efforts of the GYA state agencies to control brucellosis in bison and elk in the GYA.

The only known remaining focus of brucellosis caused by *B. abortus* in the United States is the bison and elk in the GYA and all signatory parties (Secretaries of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and United States Department of the Interior (USDI), and the Governors of the states of Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming) to the original Greater Yellowstone Interagency Brucellosis Committee (GYIBC) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which created the GYIBC, agreed that the objective is to eliminate *B. abortus* from the GYA. A plan to eliminate *B. abortus* from bison and elk in Yellowstone National Park, Grand Teton National Park, and the National Elk Refuge, and other areas of the GYA, consistent with the objectives of the original GYIBC MOU, is urgently needed. Wyoming lost its Brucellosis Class Free classification in 2004, and Idaho lost its Brucellosis Class Free status in 2006, due to transmission of *B. abortus* from wildlife to cattle. Both states have subsequently regained Class Free status. A brucellosis affected cattle herd, thought to be infected by wildlife, was disclosed in Montana in 2007, and if a second affected cattle herd is disclosed within two years, Montana will lose its Brucellosis Class Free classification as well. The loss of Brucellosis Class Free status in a state is extremely costly to the cattle industry and is a significant setback to the Bovine Brucellosis Eradication Program.

RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) strongly urges the Secretaries of the United States Departments of Agriculture (USDA) and Interior (USDI) and the Governors of the states of Montana, Idaho and Wyoming to take all steps and actions necessary to eliminate the last known vestiges of *Brucella abortus* from the United States, including, but not limited to: 1) providing necessary fiscal and human resources, and requesting additional funding as needed from Congress; 2) assuring collaboration among all relevant state and federal agencies; 3) utilizing all available, scientifically credible technologies and multidisciplinary management practices to prevent the spread of brucellosis in, between and among cattle, bison and elk; 4) providing strong direction

to these agencies to expeditiously develop a comprehensive, coordinated plan to eliminate *Brucella abortus* from the elk and bison herds in the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA).

RESPONSE

USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services

We have forwarded Resolution Number 73 to our Veterinary Services (VS) office for their response. They will submit their response directly to you along with other VS responses.

State of Wyoming

The Wyoming Livestock Board, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, and Dr. Frank Galey, Chair of the Governor's Brucellosis Coordination Team have reviewed the United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) Resolution 73 titled, "Brucellosis in the Greater Yellowstone Area" and your invitation to Governor Freudenthal for the state of Wyoming to respond. The Board, Department and Dr. Galey, on behalf of the Brucellosis Coordination Team, appreciate this opportunity.

We acknowledge and appreciate USAHA's support of the efforts our agencies and the Coordination Team have made to prevent exposure of cattle to brucellosis from elk and wild bison. We agree with the Greater Yellowstone Interagency Brucellosis Committee (GYIBC) that the ultimate objective is the elimination of *Brucella abortis* from elk and wild bison in the GYA and that a plan to do so is needed. Though we agree that a comprehensive plan to eliminate brucellosis from elk and wild bison of the GYA is the ultimate best solution, we do not believe it is possible or practical with current technology to achieve this goal and completely eliminate the disease from elk and wild bison in the near future without resorting to ethically and politically unacceptable techniques (such as depopulation).

We agree with the resolution that all agencies, state and federal, inputs collaborate while providing adequate fiscal and human resources to address the brucellosis situation in the GYA. The Wyoming Livestock Board and Wyoming Game and Fish Commission have substantial personnel, as well as a large part of our respective budgets, dedicated to brucellosis. We also agree credible technologies should be utilized to prevent transmission. Our agencies work closely with livestock producers to prevent and minimize commingling. We recognize that complete separation is not always technically possible and we also must keep big game migration corridors open.

The state of Wyoming thru collaborative efforts and on-going guidance provided by the Governor's Brucellosis Coordination Team has implemented aggressive measures to prevent transmission and reduce the prevalence of brucellosis in elk and wild bison. Some of our efforts, many of which specifically address topics in the resolution are outlined below.

Dr. Jim Logan was hired as Assistant State Veterinarian to work out of Riverton (western Wyoming). Dr. Logan's primary responsibility is overseeing the state's brucellosis program. He has two technicians working entirely on brucellosis management; cattle herd plans, and commingling prevention. The Wyoming Livestock Board has additional staff in the Cheyenne office dedicated largely or solely to brucellosis prevention. The Wyoming Game and Fish Department hired four additional personnel whose primary responsibilities are to address brucellosis issues in elk and wild bison. These personnel supplement a cadre of existing personnel who work to prevent commingling.

State and federal agencies as well as producers and sale barns continue efforts aimed at reducing the risk of introducing brucellosis in the state's livestock and identifying any cases as soon as possible. From October 2006 through September 2007, Wyoming tested 121,456 cattle in the state; none were classified as reactors, 6 were classified as suspects and appropriate actions taken. Over the same time period 177,019 cattle were vaccinated (this includes calfhood vaccinates, adult vaccinates and booster vaccinates) in the state. A few slaughter suspects were

traced back to Wyoming; one resulted in a whole herd test, all-negative. Other suspect cases were resolved without whole-herd testing.

In December 2007, state and federal personnel conducted an annual test of three cattle herds that are in the area of the original cases that occurred in 2003/2004. This included testing of approximately 1200 cattle. All tested negative. These cattle herds are also booster vaccinated every two years.

The Wyoming Livestock Board has stringent brucellosis rules. These rules have reduced some testing requirements from when the state was Class A, but still require testing of all breeding cattle sold through Wyoming auction markets and also require change of ownership testing for most test-eligible cattle from an identified area in the GYA in which contact with infected elk and wild bison is considered possible.

The Governor's Brucellosis Coordination Team continues to be significantly engaged and provides recommendations aimed at reducing the risk of brucellosis transmission from elk and wild bison to cattle. Recommendations made by this group that have been implemented are the development of cattle herd management plans, elk and wild bison Brucellosis Management Action Plans, and a pilot test and slaughter program for feedground elk.

The Wyoming Livestock Board and USDA-APHIS-VS personnel have worked with producers to develop over 160 cattle herd plans. Herd plans are voluntary and individualized based on the specific herd's exposure to potentially infected elk and wild bison. They represent an obligation of the producer to take certain steps to minimize the risk of transmission to their cattle and include surveillance measures for herds with potential elk and wild bison contact. Several herd plans call for periodic adult booster vaccination with Strain RB5 1.

The Wyoming Game and Fish Department has completed Brucellosis Management Action Plans for all seven elk herds and the two wild bison herds in Northwestern Wyoming that are known to have brucellosis. These plans require wildlife management aimed at minimizing risk of brucellosis transmission from elk and wild bison to livestock and they provide for implementation of practices to reduce brucellosis in elk and wild bison.

In the winter of 2006, the Wyoming Game and Fish Department began a test and slaughter pilot project of elk on the Muddy Creek feedground. That year, 158 test eligible females were trapped; 58 (37%) of these elk were seropositive and sent to slaughter and culture. Eighteen (32%) of the seropositive elk were culture positive. The project continued during the winter of 2007 with the capture of 79 test eligible female elk; 13 (16%) of which were seropositive and eight (62%) of seropositive were culture positive. The test and slaughter program will be expanded to additional feedgrounds commencing in the winter of 2008-09.

As you can see, the State of Wyoming is fully committed to addressing brucellosis in the GYA. USAHA is uniquely positioned to help with those efforts. We strongly encourage USAHA to persistently obtain federal funding for additional research into diagnostics, vaccines, and vaccine delivery techniques. These tools are sorely needed if we are in fact going to reach of the goal of eradication of brucellosis in the GYA.