Western Canadian Animal Health Network

WECAHN BEEF NETWORK PRODUCER REPORT

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2025

The WeCAHN Beef Network held a quarterly videoconference meeting on November 12th, 2025. The network members discussed the animal health events from July to September. with veterinary practitioners, diagnosticians, veterinary college faculty, researchers, and industry representatives.

1) Overview

Data sources in this report include:

1. Clinical Impressions Surveys completed by network practitioners.
2. Data shared by western veterinary diagnostic laboratories: Manitoba Veterinary Diagnostic Services (VDS) laboratory, Prairie Diagnostic Services (PDS) laboratory, and University of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Services Unit (UCVM DSU).
3. Scan: bovine surveillance reported by other sources or networks.

2) Interesting Cases

i) Case study: Re-emergence of liver flukes in mature cattle

- A veterinarian in Manitoba reported more liver fluke cases in adult cattle than in previous years, mostly found during post-mortem exams.
- The issue was identified on a 50-cow/calf farm after the sudden death of an adult cow.
- Post-mortem findings included yellow discoloration, severe liver damage, and heavy infestation with *Fasciola magna* (5 cm long and 1-2 cm in diameter).
- White-tailed deer are common wildlife reservoirs of liver flukes, with spread linked to wet grazing areas that support snails.
- The case highlights increased risk for herds grazing low-lying, wet areas during periods of higher rainfall in southeastern Manitoba.

ii) Case study: Systemic blackleg in calves

- Five calves died over two weeks on a farm experiencing drought and shrinking dugout water levels. No recent changes to feed, pasture, or water management were reported before the deaths.
- Laboratory testing confirmed widespread infection with *Clostridium chauvoei*, the bacterium that causes blackleg.
- Similar cases continue to occur in unvaccinated cattle and in older cows not vaccinated since youth.
- An increase in cases has been observed in southern Saskatchewan, possibly linked to cattle being forced into low-lying areas during drought.

iii) Case study: Cardiac blackleg in farmed bison calves

- Fifteen bison calves aged one to two months were found dead in a single pasture within a large herd.
- Post-mortem exams showed severe inflammation around the heart and damage to heart muscle.
- Laboratory testing of the heart confirmed infection with *Clostridium chauvoei*.
- Mineral testing showed multiple deficiencies, including very low copper levels.
- The findings underline the importance of including mineral analysis and reviewing feeding programs when unexplained deaths occur.

iii) Laboratory case: Bloodstream infection in farmed elk calves

- Ten elk calves aged four to six weeks died shortly after being moved to pasture and starting to graze.
- Post-mortem exams showed bleeding in the heart lining, enlarged spleens, and widespread blood vessel damage.
- Laboratory testing isolated *E. coli* from multiple organs, confirming a severe systemic infection.
- Mineral analysis identified low levels of several trace minerals, especially copper.
- The case emphasizes the need to regularly assess mineral supplementation in farmed elk herds.

iv) Case study: Suspected fertilizer poisoning near Quesnel, British Columbia (Link, link)

- Eleven cows were found dead on crown land near Quesnel, BC, following suspected fertilizer spillage during helicopter loading of fertilizer for forestry plots.
- Blue fertilizer material was found on the ground, and cattle were observed licking it.
- Fertilizer granules were seen in the rumen, but laboratory confirmation was limited by poor sample quality.
- Rapid deaths were consistent with acute poisoning in cattle not accustomed to this exposure.
- The incident highlights the importance of preventing livestock access to fertilizer on grazing lands and ensuring prompt field investigation when exposures are suspected.

3) Practitioner and lab surveillance

Important information:

Clinical impressions surveys

Quarterly surveys are completed by network practitioners. Answers: Never; Rarely = 1-2 times per 3 months; Commonly = 1-2 times per month; Very frequently = 3+ times per month.

'Control charts'

Control charts are a simple way of presenting data collected over time (e.g., increasing or decreasing detection frequencies). Each data point reflects the number of positive samples or cases reported by a diagnostic laboratory over 3 months (quarter of a year). The upper and lower horizontal lines are called control limits. Individual points lying outside the control limits suggest a need for investigation to determine whether/how significant a signal they represent.

Respiratory system disease

Clinical impressions survey and trends

- Respiratory disease was reported commonly overall.
- Laryngotracheitis was reported rarely, with infectious bronchitis virus reported rarely and **stable**.
- Bronchopneumonia was reported from rarely to commonly**,** most often linked with *Mannheimia, Pasteurella, Mycoplasma*, and respiratory viruses, and trends were **stable**.
- Fibrinous pneumonia ranged from **never** to rarely, with *Mannheimia* and *Pasteurella* noted and trends **stable**.
- Interstitial pneumonia was reported rarely, with respiratory viruses reported rarely and **stable**, while atypical interstitial pneumonia was **never** reported.

Laboratory diagnostic results

At Prairie Diagnostic Services (PDS), there were no detections of bovine herpesvirus 1 or bovine respiratory syncytial virus in beef cattle, and one coronavirus PCR detection; all were within control limits. Bacterial cultures for common respiratory pathogens in beef cattle were also within control limits. At Manitoba Veterinary Diagnostic Services (VDS), there were no detections of coronavirus, bovine herpesvirus 1, or bovine respiratory syncytial virus, and findings were within control limits. At the University of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Services Unit (UCVM DSU), a single beef calf was diagnosed with *Pasteurella* bronchopneumonia as part of a more widespread infection, and additional isolated pneumonia cases were reported. Overall pneumonia diagnoses at PDS and VDS remained within control limits.

Digestive system disease

Clinical impressions survey

- Digestive system disease was reported **commonly**.

Laboratory diagnostic results

At PDS, Johne's disease testing results were within control limits, with no diagnoses this quarter. *Salmonella* Dublin testing remained within control limits across cattle. Single detections of coronavirus and bovine viral diarrhea virus were identified in beef cattle, while other diarrheal pathogen testing was within control limits. At VDS, calf diarrhea pathogen testing remained within control limits. At UCVM DSU, several individual cases of enteritis, septicemia, and traumatic digestive disease were diagnosed, including cases involving *E. coli*, coccidia, and *Cryptosporidium*. One case of liver damage with bacterial growth was also reported.

Reproductive system disease

Clinical impressions survey and trends

- Reproductive disease ranged from **rarely** to **very frequently** reported.
- Uterine disease was reported **rarely**.
- Ovarian disease and bull injuries were reported **commonly**.
- Male reproductive disease was reported **rarely**.
- Infectious infertility and other infertility causes were **never** reported.

Laboratory diagnostic results

At PDS, *Neospora* testing remained within control limits, with a small number of beef cases detected. At VDS, *Neospora*-positive cases exceeded control limits this quarter, including PCR-confirmed cases. At UCVM DSU, a single animal tested positive on serology. Testing for *Tritrichomonas foetus* showed no detections this quarter and remained within control limits. One uterine pathology case was reported at UCVM DSU.

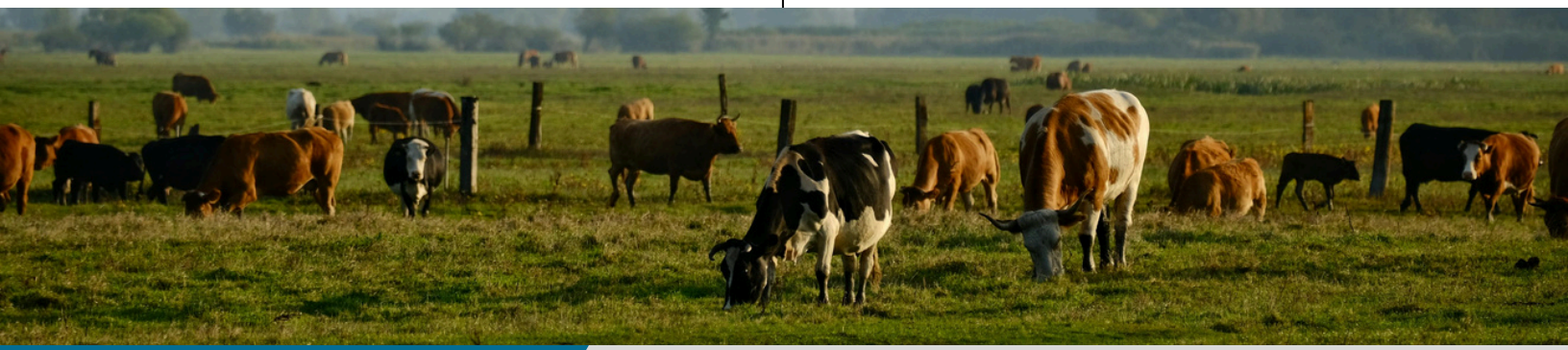
Musculoskeletal system conditions

Clinical impressions survey and trends

- Musculoskeletal issues ranged from **rarely** to **commonly** reported.
- Foot lesions and lameness as well as sand cracks and other food diseases were reported **commonly** and **increasing**.
- Non-foot lameness was reported **rarely** and **stable**.

Laboratory diagnostic results

At UCVM DSU, one joint sample from an adult beef cow yielded a mixed bacterial culture, indicating a complex joint infection.



Congenital disease

Clinical impressions survey

- Congenital disease ranged from never to rarely reported.

Laboratory diagnostic results

At UCVM DSU, a single animal was diagnosed with a diaphragmatic hernia, with low-level bacterial growth noted in tissues.

Neurological system disease

Clinical impressions survey

- Neurological disease was reported rarely.

Dermatological disease

Clinical impression survey

- Skin disease ranged from never to commonly reported.
- External parasites were reported rarely, with lice reported rarely and stable, and mange **never** reported this quarter.
- Bacterial and other skin diseases were **never** reported.

Trauma, injury, or welfare-related issues

Clinical impressions survey

- Trauma, injury, or welfare concerns were reported rarely.

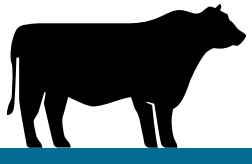
Cardiovascular system disease

Clinical impressions survey

- Cardiovascular disease was reported rarely.

Laboratory diagnostic results

At PDS and VDS, single cases of heart inflammation were reported this quarter, remaining within expected levels.



Multisystemic diseases

Clinical impressions survey and trends

- Multisystemic disease (affecting multiple body systems) ranged from rarely to commonly reported.
- Anemia and septicemia were reported rarely, with clostridial disease and *Mannheimia* reported rarely and **stable**.
- Toxicities were reported rarely, with copper toxicity **never** reported and lead toxicity reported rarely and **stable**.
- Nutritional deficiencies were reported rarely, with copper deficiency **stable** and other trace mineral deficiencies **never** reported.
- Increased calf losses were reported rarely, while increased open cows were reported commonly.

Laboratory diagnostic results

At PDS, bovine leukemia virus testing showed a low proportion of positive results for all cattle within control limits, although beef results were near the upper control limit. At VDS, results remained within control limits. Septicemia cases were infrequent at PDS and UCVM DSU, with several individual animals showing mixed bacterial infections, including *E. coli* and clostridial species.

Urinary system disease

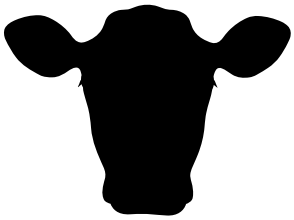
Clinical impressions survey

- Urinary system disease ranged from **never** to commonly reported.

Mastitis

Laboratory diagnostic results

At VDS, cultures for *Staphylococcus aureus* exceeded the upper control limit this quarter, indicating increased detection



4) Scan of notable diseases

i) Bovine tuberculosis (bTB) investigation in a Manitoba dairy herd (Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA, 2025). Status as of November 6th, 2025:

- One infected dairy herd has been fully depopulated, and laboratory testing is still ongoing.
- The bTB strain does not closely match strains previously found in livestock or wildlife in North America.
- Trace-back and contact investigations are ongoing, including herds that shared animals or fence lines. A total of 44 herds have been identified, with 13 released from quarantine or not requiring quarantine, and more herds still being assessed. No additional bTB cases have been found to date, reducing immediate risk to other herds.
- CFIA is using accredited veterinarians for lower-risk herd testing, which may speed up investigations and reduce disruption for producers.

ii) Bovine theileriosis in Ontario cow

- *Theileria orientalis* Ikeda, a blood parasite of cattle, was confirmed in a dairy cow in Ontario on October 21, 2025, marking the first known case in Canada.
- The cow was imported from Illinois and had anemia after import but has since recovered and is considered a lifelong carrier.
- The Asian longhorned tick, which can spread this parasite, has not been detected in Canada, and none were found on the farm. The tick is very small and has been spreading in the Eastern US since 2017, increasing concern for future introduction.
- Producers are encouraged to stay informed through Canadian resources such as e-tick and the Canadian Animal Health Surveillance System (CAHSS) vector-borne diseases webpage, and the VECTOR education library (https://www.vector-education.org/).

iii) Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 in dairy cattle and poultry

- No HPAI has been detected in Canadian cattle. As of November 4th CFIA has tested 6,643 raw milk samples in Canada, and all were negative for HPAI (CFIA LINK).
- Canada is experiencing an early and active HPAI season in poultry, with major impacts in British Columbia and Alberta.
- In the United States, one new dairy herd case was confirmed in Idaho, bringing the total to 1,082 cases in 18 states (USDA-APHIS LINK).
- Mandatory milk testing continues in the U.S. under the National Milk Testing Strategy, and poultry outbreaks remain widespread.

iv) Lumpy Skin Disease in Europe

- Lumpy skin disease causes skin nodules in cattle and can be fatal, with spread mainly by biting insects.
- The disease has expanded from Africa into Europe, with confirmed cases in Italy, France, and Spain in 2025.
- Canada has applied import restrictions on cattle and related products from affected areas.
- Producers should be aware of CFIA's Notice to Industry and Fact Sheet on lumpy skin disease.

v) Seneca Valley virus relevance to cattle health

- Seneca Valley virus (SVV) mainly affects pigs and has increased in Canada since 2015. (Manitoba Pork)
- The virus causes lesions that look like foot-and-mouth disease, which can trigger serious trade and regulatory consequences.
- A research team reported disease in buffalo caused by SVV. If a strain were to adapt to cattle, it could have major economic and regulatory impacts for the livestock sector.

5) Network Updates

Research Initiatives

A new Beef Cattle Research Council–funded study will examine links between vitamin levels in aborted fetuses and blood samples from the dam. The project is scheduled to begin in January 2026 and is open to beef cattle submissions from all provinces.

The study requires 50 paired submissions, each consisting of an aborted fetus and a matching cow blood sample.

Testing will look at infectious and nutritional factors in the fetus and vitamin and mineral levels in the cow with laboratory testing costs subsidized by the Beef Cattle Research Council.

Producers and veterinarians interested in participating can contact Dr. Yanyun Huang at yanyun.huang@usask.ca for details.

Producer Takeaways

- Wet pastures, drought, and mineral problems continue to increase the risk of parasites, clostridial disease, and blood infections in cattle.
- Missed vaccinations and mineral deficiencies remain common risk factors in cattle and other farmed species.
- Most disease patterns were stable this quarter, but the spread of serious cattle diseases and pests in other countries shows the importance of ongoing veterinary involvement, lab testing, and disease monitoring.

Financial support was provided under the Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a federal-provincial-territorial initiative.