Western Canadian Animal Health Network

WECAHN BEEF NETWORK PRODUCER SUMMARY

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 Manitoba farm reported increased liver fluke cases in adult cattle, mostly found during post-mortem exams after sudden deaths. Post-mortem findings included yellowed liver, severe liver damage, and heavy infestation with *Fasciola magna*. White-tailed deer commonly carry this parasites which spread via snails in wet pastures. Herds grazing low-lying, wet areas during high rainfall are at higher risk.

ii) Case study: Systemic blackleg in calves

Five calves died over two weeks during drought conditions with shrinking water sources. Laboratory testing confirmed *Clostridium chauvoei* (bacteria which causes blackleg) in multiple organs. Cases occur mainly in unvaccinated or older cattle, with prevalence increasing in southern Saskatchewan. Drought forcing cattle into low-lying areas may contribute to outbreaks.

iii) Case study: Cardiac blackleg in farmed bison calves

Fifteen 1–2 month-old bison calves were found dead in one pasture of a large herd. Post-mortem exams showed severe heart inflammation and damage; *Clostridium chauvoei* was confirmed in heart tissue. Mineral testing revealed deficiencies, particularly very low copper. Highlights the importance of reviewing mineral supplementation and feeding programs when unexplained deaths occur.

iv) Case study: Bloodstream infection in farmed elk calves

Ten 4–6 week-old elk calves died shortly after turnout onto pasture. Necropsy showed bleeding in the heart lining, enlarged spleens, and widespread blood vessel damage; *E. coli* was isolated from multiple organs. Mineral testing indicated deficiencies, especially copper. Emphasizes regular evaluation of trace mineral supplementation in farmed elk herds.

v) Case study: Suspected fertilizer poisoning in cattle (British Columbia)

Eleven cows were found dead on crown land near Quesnel, BC, following suspected spillage of blue fertilizer during helicopter loading. Cattle were observed licking the fertilizer, and granules were found in the rumen, though lab confirmation was limited. Rapid deaths were consistent with acute poisoning in unaccustomed cattle. Highlights the need to prevent livestock access to fertilizers and to investigate suspected exposures promptly.

3) Syndromic Surveillance

Respiratory disease in beef cattle remained common this quarter, with main issues including bronchopneumonia, interstitial pneumonia, and pleuritis. Key pathogens such as *Mannheimia haemolytica, Pasteurella multocida, Mycoplasma bovis,* and bovine respiratory coronavirus were detected at stable levels.

Digestive system disease was also common, with diarrhea, enteritis, and occasional hepatitis reported. Pathogens of note included *Eimeria* spp., *Cryptosporidium, Escherichia coli,* and *Clostridium perfringens*, with overall detections remaining within expected ranges. Johne's disease and *Salmonella Dublin* remained rare or within normal levels.

Reproductive disease varied from rare to frequent, with ovarian issues and bull reproductive injuries reported most often. *Neospora caninum* detections were above expected levels this quarter, while *Tritrichomonas foetus* was not detected. Uterine and male reproductive infections remained rare.

Musculoskeletal issues, especially lameness and foot lesions, remain common and appear to be increasing. Mixed bacterial infections (*Staphylococcus* spp., *Peptoniphilus* spp.) were occasionally detected in joints, while other foot conditions remained rare.

Congenital and neurological diseases were rare, with isolated cases such as diaphragmatic hernia observed.
Dermatological issues, including lice infestations, were infrequent and stable compared to last year.
Trauma and welfare-related issues were rare.
Cardiovascular disease was rare, with a few cases of myocarditis reported.

Multisystemic diseases, including septicemia and anemia, occurred infrequently, with *Clostridia* and *Mannheimia haemolytica* stable. Trace mineral deficiencies, particularly copper, were rare but stable, and calf mortality and open cow rates were slightly elevated. Bovine leukemia virus remained low overall.

Mastitis caused by *Staphylococcus aureus* exceeded expected levels, highlighting ongoing herd health and biosecurity considerations.

4) Scan of notable diseases

i) Update Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB) - Manitoba:

One dairy herd was depopulated. The bTB strain does not match any known North American livestock or wildlife strains. No additional cases have been found, though 44 related herds are being traced, with some released from quarantine. Use of accredited private veterinarians for lower-risk herd testing has improved surveillance.

ii) Bovine theileriosis - Ontario:

Theileria orientalis Ikeda (a blood parasite of cattle) was detected for the first time in Canada in a single imported dairy cow, which has recovered but remains a lifelong carrier. The tick vector, Asian longhorned tick, is not yet present in Canada. Awareness of tick surveillance and health checks for imported cattle is important to prevent local establishment.

iii) Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) - Canada and U.S.:

No HPAI has ever been detected in Canadian cattle or raw milk, though outbreaks continue in U.S. dairy herds. An early start to the HPAI fall season is affecting poultry flocks in Canada and the US. Continued vigilance, and biosecurity are essential for HPAI prevention.

iv) Lumpy Skin Disease (LSD) - Europe:

LSD has been confirmed for the first time in Italy, France, and Spain, with import restrictions applied by Canada. The disease spreads via biting insects and can be fatal. LSD is absent in the Americas.

v) Seneca Valley Virus (SVV) - buffalo:

SVV, primarily affecting pigs, continues to be present in Canada and can cause vesicles resembling Foot and Mouth Disease. While cattle infections have not been reported, research confirmed SVV disease in buffalos in China. Producers should be on the look out and report any hoof or mouth blister/ulcer to their veterinarian.

Beef Cattle Vitamin Study – samples required:

A new project will study vitamin levels in aborted fetuses and matching cow–calf serum pairs across Canada, starting January 2026. BCRC subsidizes testing for 50 sample pairs, covering diagnostics but not veterinary collection. Contact your veterinarian for more information.

5) Producer Takeaways:

1. Wet pastures, drought, and mineral problems continue to increase the risk of parasites, clostridial disease, and blood infections in cattle.
2. Missed vaccinations and mineral deficiencies remain common risk factors in cattle and other farmed species.
3. 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.

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