Western Canadian Animal Health Network

WECAHN BEEF NETWORK PRODUCER SUMMARY

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2025

The WeCAHN Beef Network held a quarterly videoconference meeting on February 11th, 2026. The network members discussed the animal health events from October to December, 2025. Veterinary practitioners, diagnosticians, veterinary college faculty, researchers, and industry representatives attended the meeting. Data were synthesized from clinical impressions surveys completed by practitioners and laboratory submissions from Prairie Diagnostic Services (PDS), Manitoba Veterinary Diagnostic Services (VDS), and the University of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Services Unit (UCVM DSU).

2) Interesting Cases

A cluster of diphtheria was reported in weaned calves, yearlings, and an adult cow during extreme cold, with the adult cow initially showing mild respiratory signs without fever and not responding to antibiotics. The cow later developed airway obstruction consistent with diphtheria, and a tracheotomy provided immediate relief, although she later declined, likely due to secondary pneumonia. This case highlights that diphtheria can occur beyond neonatal calves, potentially linked to airway trauma or respiratory disease.

Another notable case involved pneumonia in pasture calves and an adult cow, with liver cultures confirming *Clostridium haemolyticum* as the likely cause. Infection occurred without liver flukes, showing that this pathogen can affect cattle even without typical predisposing factors. Herd vaccination programs should be reviewed as not all clostridial vaccines protect against this specific organism.

In a well-vaccinated dairy herd, two abortions were confirmed to be caused by *Coxiella burnetii* using PCR testing of placental and fetal tissues. Lesions included necrotizing placentitis and fetal liver changes, but histopathology alone may not be definitive. Because of the zoonotic risk of Q fever, proper personal protective equipment (gloves, eye and respiratory protection) is important for anyone handling abortions. Ongoing surveillance in Saskatchewan supports alternative sampling strategies when placentas are not available.

In another investigation, black Angus bulls and heifers experienced intermittent bloody stool and rectal prolapse, often resolving when animals stood. Low-level detection of *Cryptosporidium*, bovine coronavirus, *Giardia*, and pathogenic *E. coli* was noted, along with marginal vitamin and mineral deficiencies, but no single infectious, nutritional or toxic cause was identified. Feed management changes, including feeding twice daily, resolved the issue, suggesting that excessive rumen fill and gorging behavior contributed to clinical signs, and highlighting the importance of considering management factors when diagnostics are inconclusive.

2) Syndromic and Laboratory Surveillance

Respiratory disease remains very common and shows a slight increase overall, with bronchopneumonia, fibrinous pneumonia, and interstitial pneumonia as the main conditions. Key pathogens include *Mannheimia haemolytica, Pasteurella multocida, Histophilus somni*, and *Mycoplasma bovis*, with trends generally stable to increasing, and some reports of treatment failure. Viral detections such as BRSV and *Mycoplasma bovis* were above normal levels, while most other pathogens remained within expected ranges, although interstitial pneumonia has increased over time.

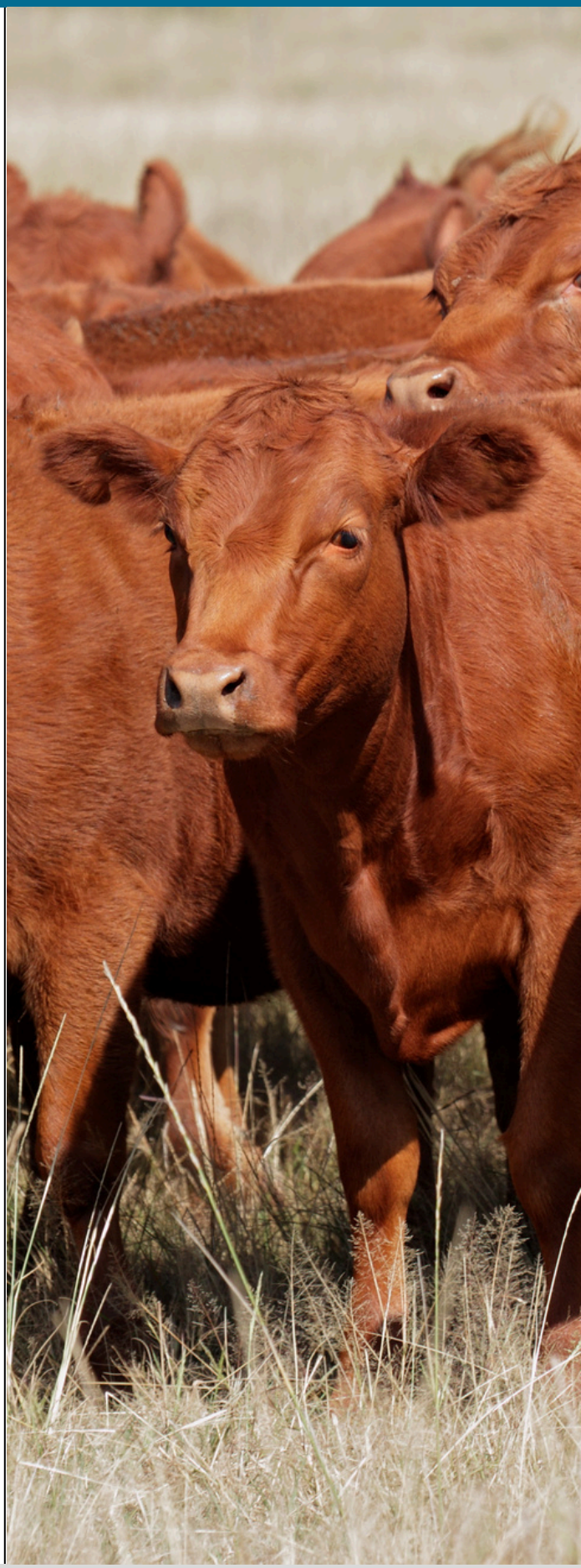
Digestive disease occurs at variable levels and remains generally stable, with diarrhea, bloat, and Johne's disease as the main concerns. Key pathogens include *Clostridium* spp., *E. coli*, *Cryptosporidium*, and rotavirus, with most detections within normal ranges, although BVD was higher than expected. Overall trends suggest stable disease patterns with occasional increases linked to specific pathogens.

Reproductive issues, including abortions and infertility, remain stable overall with some variability. Key pathogens include *Neospora caninum* and *Coxiella burnetii*, with detections generally within expected levels, although some increases in serology were noted. Nutritional factors such as energy, protein, and mineral deficiencies also contributed and showed mixed stable to increasing trends.

Musculoskeletal disease, including lameness, arthritis, and foot conditions, remains common and appears to be increasing compared to last year. Conditions such as digital dermatitis and white line disease showed stable to increasing trends, while some other lameness issues were stable or decreasing. Increased reporting may be partly due to greater producer attention and willingness to investigate and treat.

Neurological disease remains uncommon overall and generally stable, with occasional cases of polioencephalomalacia and meningitis. Diagnoses were sporadic and remained within expected levels, with no clear increasing trends.

Skin conditions and external parasites remain common and appear to be increasing in some herds. Lice and mange were the main issues, with some reports of treatment failure, while bacterial and fungal skin infections remained stable and low.

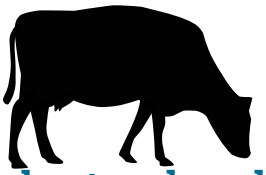


Trauma and welfare-related issues remain low and stable, with occasional injuries and rare cases of poor body condition reported.

Cardiovascular disease, particularly myocarditis, remains present at low to moderate levels and appears stable to increasing. *H. somni* was the main pathogen and showed stable to increasing trends, while other causes were rarely reported, and overall diagnoses remained within expected ranges.

Multisystemic disease, including septicemia and Johne's disease, remains generally stable. *H. somni* and *E. coli* detections were within normal levels, while Johne's disease testing remained within expected limits despite slight increases in some measures.

Mastitis remains uncommon in beef cattle and generally stable. Key pathogens include *Staphylococcus aureus* and other staphylococci, with most detections within expected ranges, although one group showed a slight increase above normal levels.



3) Research and network updates

A Canadian study found low exposure to leptospirosis in beef calves at weaning, with most animals testing negative and only a small number positive. *Leptospira* Hardjo was more common in Western Canada, while wildlife-related types like L. Grippotyphosa and Pomona were also detected. Vaccination rates remain moderate (~36%), and results suggest current programs may have limited impact on calf exposure. Ongoing studies will help guide future vaccination and management decisions.

The Alberta Feedlot Animal Health and Welfare Surveillance Program (*AFHWS*) is tracking key health issues in feedlot cattle, including respiratory disease, lameness, and overall death losses. Early results are available *online* and show trends by factors such as days on feed, breed, and sex. This program helps fill a gap in reliable feedlot health data in Canada.

Manitoba continues to provide regular updates on cattle health issues, including bovine tuberculosis and liver fluke. Ongoing meetings will also cover diseases like avian influenza and lead poisoning, along with regulatory changes. These updates help producers stay informed current diseases and emerging risks.

The Calf health and mortality surveillance (C3H-PEN) project is tracking early calf deaths and monitoring mineral status through blood testing. Postmortem exams and sample collection aim to better understand causes of calf loss. A large sample bank is available to support future research and improve herd management.

A new diagnostic approach at PDS can test for many abortion causes at once and has improved the ability to find a cause in most cases. This supports better understanding of reproductive losses in beef herds. Similar tools are being developed for respiratory disease to improve future diagnosis and control.

4) Emerging and International Disease update

Investigations into bovine Tuberculosis (bTB) in Saskatchewan beef herds continue, with one herd depopulated in 2024 after multiple additional cases were found and several linked herds still under investigation. A 2023 case has been resolved, with most related herds released from quarantine. Ongoing testing and movement controls remain important to limit spread and meet regulatory requirements.

Two cases of theileriosis caused by *Theileria orientalis* Ikeda were reported in Ontario in November 2025, including one imported case and other that may have spread within the same farm. No long horn ticks have been detected in Canada. No widely available vaccine exists, and antibiotics are not effective against this parasite. Prevention focuses on biosecurity, testing incoming cattle, controlling ticks, and managing pasture and fence-line vegetation to reduce risk.

Lumpy skin disease has expanded beyond Africa into Europe, with outbreaks reported in Italy, France, and Spain in 2025. This spread highlights the risk of emerging diseases moving between regions.

Bluetongue virus, spread by biting midges, affected hundreds of animals in England and was also detected in Northern Ireland (new area) in late 2025. This disease affects all cloven-hooved animals and shows how insect-borne diseases can spread into new areas. Monitoring and vector control are important to reduce risk.

No cases of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) H5N1 have been found in Canadian cattle, and milk testing has remained negative, but poultry in Western Canada continue to be affected. In the United States, cases in dairy cattle have stabilized; though poultry outbreaks continue, human cases linked to animal exposure have stabilized. In Europe, milk antibodies were found in cows in the Netherlands, showing possible exposure, along with confirmed HPAI infections in barn cats on the same farm. Remain vigilant for severely ill and dead cats, as they become rapidly ill with HPAI and can be a signal of local infection.

Producer Takeaways

- Unusual cases of diphtheria and laryngotracheitis were reported in older cattle, and suspected clostridial hepatitis linked to *Clostridium haemolyticum* was observed, showing that known diseases can appear in unexpected ways.
- Abortions due to *Coxiella burnetii* in a dairy herd, are a reminder of the importance of PCR testing and the ongoing risk of Q fever to humans.
- Bovine theileriosis caused by *Theileria orientalis* Ikeda was detected in two dairy Ontario cows, with one case suggesting possible local transmission even without the Asian Long-horned tick being present in Canada.
- Ongoing Canadian surveillance projects continue to monitor cattle health, including leptospirosis, feedlot health, and the use of sequencing tools for abortion and respiratory disease investigations.

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