Western Canadian Animal Health Network

WECAHN BEEF NETWORK PRODUCER REPORT

JANUARY - MARCH 2026

The WeCAHN Beef Network held a quarterly virtual meeting on May 13th, 2026. The network members discussed the animal health events from January to March, 2026. Veterinary practitioners, diagnosticians, veterinary college faculty, researchers, and industry representatives attended the meeting.

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) Monensin-associated calf deaths

- A small beef herd reported sudden deaths in several 350-400 lb calves after feeding mill byproducts including poultry feeds.
- One calf showed heart-related and nervous system signs, and no fractures were found despite initial suspicion after the calf wasn't able to stand up.
- Several calves died during the investigation, including one handled in a chute.
- Post-mortem findings showed heart tissue damage (fibrous and mineralized tissue) consistent with ionophore (monensin) exposure.
- Ionophore exposure can cause hidden heart damage and stressed animals may die later without clear warning signs.

ii) Oral ulcers in feedlot heifers

- A veterinarian was called to examine a group of 200 heifers with poor appetite, drooling, and mouth sores after two months in a large feedlot.
- Testing ruled out common viral causes, but *Mycoplasma bovis* was detected in pooled samples. Feed was ruled out to be the cause of mouth irritation, **and no other animals in the feedlot were affected**.
- A pox-like virus was considered the likely primary cause, with *M. bovis* possibly present secondarily.
- The condition raised concern due to possible spread between animals and relevance to cattle handling and bite-associated pox-like virus infection risk to people.

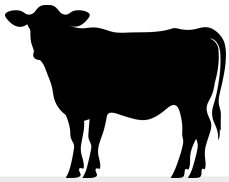
iii) Abortion with *Neospora caninum* detection

- Five abortions occurred in a group of 65 purchased bred heifers near expected calving time with no clear management or environmental trigger.
- Two fetuses examined showed signs of an infection.
- Testing identified *N. caninum*, but at low levels and key expected tissue changes were not observed in fetuses or placentas.
- Pathologists highlighted that: detection of *N. caninum* alone does not confirm it caused the abortions, N. caninum may be present at low levels in bovine fetuses, and tissue damage and timing of abortion need to be considered in abortion investigations.

iv) Feed-related abortion outbreak with onions and selenium exposure

- A group of 180 heifers fell ill and many aborted shortly before expected calving time.
- Early signs included difficult births, difficulty breathing, and red urine in affected cattle.
- Some animals died, and post-mortem findings showed liver and kidney damage consistent with toxic injury.
- Later in the investigation it was discovered that heifers had had free access to waste onions grown in selenium rich soil.
- Additional feed analysis indicated high selenium intake from multiple sources including selenium rich soils and mineral blocks.
- Removing onions and correcting the ration stopped abortions within about 10 days, showing a strong feed-related link.

3) Syndromic Surveillance



Important information:

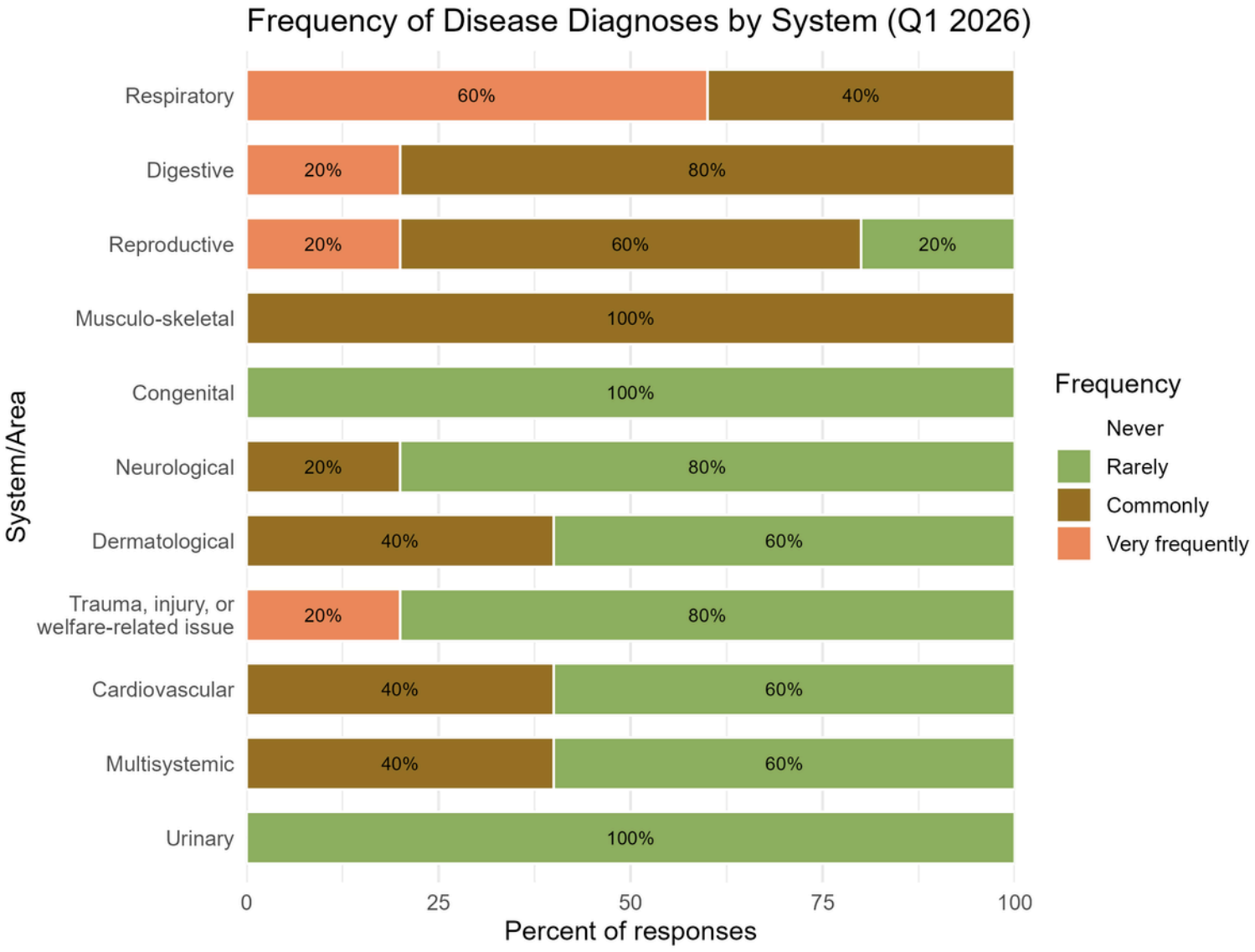
Clinical impression surveys

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.

Body systems summary



Respiratory system disease

Clinical impressions surveys showed respiratory disease remained a leading concern, with bronchopneumonia reported from **commonly to very frequent levels** and fibrinous pneumonia also consistently reported. Key causes included *Mannheimia haemolytica*, *Pasteurella multocida*, *Histophilus somni*, and *Mycoplasma bovis*, with most trends described as stable, though some increases were noted and treatment challenges were reported by multiple practitioners. Viral contributors such as IBR, PI-3, and bovine coronavirus were generally **rare** or stable, while BRSV and interstitial pneumonia cases persisted at moderate levels.

Manitoba Veterinary Diagnostic Services (VDS) reported BHV-1, BRSV, bovine coronavirus, and *M. bovis* detections were within control limits, though BRSV and *M. bovis* approached upper limits. Diagnosed conditions included bronchopneumonia, BRSV-associated interstitial pneumonia, and *P. multocida* pneumonia. Prairie Diagnostic Services (PDS) reported BHV-1 detections increasing but still within control limits, while other respiratory pathogens remained stable; diagnoses such as bronchopneumonia, interstitial pneumonia, and bronchiolitis declined and remained within expected ranges. UCVM-DSU culture results most commonly included *M. haemolytica, P. multocida, B. trehalosi*, and *H. somni*, with *Streptococcus lutetiensis* increasing recently and associated with pneumonia cases.

Cardiovascular system disease

Clinical impressions surveys showed myocarditis ranged from **rare** to **very frequent**, with *H. somni* reported as **common to very frequent and increasing** in some herds, and treatment challenges noted. Other cardiovascular disease was reported at **rare** to **common** levels. Nutritional myopathy was not reported.

PDS identified cases of cardiomyopathy, myocarditis, and right-sided heart failure. UCVM-DSU also diagnosed myocarditis cases, supporting ongoing cardiovascular disease activity in feedlot cattle populations.

Digestive system disease

Digestive disease remained consistently reported, with diarrhea described as **common** across all respondents. Key pathogens included *E. coli*, rotavirus, coronavirus, and *Cryptosporidium*, with most trends described as **stable**, though some variation in severity and response was noted. Johne's disease (*Mycobacterium avium* subsp. *paratuberculosis* or MAP) remained **rare** but **slightly increasing**, and coccidiosis ranged up to very frequent in some reports.

Laboratory results from VDS identified rotavirus, coronavirus, and *Cryptosporidium* as the most common enteric pathogens, all within expected ranges, along with isolated *Salmonella* Dublin. PDS findings showed *Salmonella* detections were low and within control limits, while bovine coronavirus approached the upper control limit. UCVM-DSU reported increasing gastrointestinal inflammatory disease cases, including peritonitis and hepatitis, although no control limits were exceeded.

Reproductive system disease

Clinical impression surveys showed abortions ranged from **rare to common,** while other reproductive disorders remained variable but generally **stable**. Infectious infertility causes were consistently not reported, and non-infectious causes such as nutrition-related issues were **rare and stable**.

Laboratory results from VDS included isolated abortion diagnoses such as herpesvirus-related abortion and *Bacillus licheniformis* abortion, with *B. licheniformis* continuing an increasing trend. PDS detected *N. caninum, Tritrichomonas foetus*, and occasional *Ureaplasma diversum*, with *B. licheniformis* approaching upper control limits. UCVM-DSU reported idiopathic abortions, *Neospora*-associated cases, and occasional bacterial and viral abortions, with serologic evidence of *N. caninum* exposure in some animals.

Musculoskeletal system disease

Foot-related lameness and interdigital dermatitis were reported from rare to very frequent, with most conditions described as **stable**, though some increases were noted and treatment difficulties were reported. Fractures and arthritis remained **stable to occasionally increasing** in frequency. Non-foot lameness conditions were reported at rare to common levels.

PDS identified isolated cases of polyserositis, myopathy, and clostridial myositis (blackleg). No major shifts in disease patterns were reported across diagnostic laboratories.

Neurological system disease

Neurological disease remained rare across all survey respondents, including conditions such as paralysis, seizures, and Polioencephalomalacia ("polio"). Reported cases remained limited and sporadic.

VDS reported a case of suppurative meningoencephalitis. PDS diagnosed two cases of polio and one case of meningoencephalitis. UCVM-DSU also confirmed a case of polio.

Dermatological disease

External parasites were reported from rare to common, with lice reported as common to very frequent and **stable**, though treatment challenges were noted. Mange remained rare, while other ectoparasites were consistently present. Skin infections of bacterial and fungal origin were **variable but generally stable**.

PDS reported isolated cases of squamous cell carcinoma and bacterial dermatitis. No major outbreaks were identified across laboratories.

Multisystemic diseases

Septicemia was reported from rare to common levels, with *E. coli, .H somni, M. haemolytica*, and *Clostridia* involved and generally **stable**, though some increases were noted in *H. somni* and *M. haemolytica*. Nutritional deficiencies were mostly rare **and stable**, and toxicities were not common.

VDS reported MAP (Johne's disease) detections within control limits but with a persistent upward trend, along with cases of bacillary hemoglobinuria and *C. perfringens* increases. PDS confirmed Johne's disease cases, septicemia within control limits, and isolated cases of *Anaplasma marginale* and bacillary hemoglobinuria. UCVM-DSU reported a septicemia case with concurrent respiratory and cardiac disease.

Mastitis

Mastitis cases in beef cattle remained limited, with few culture-positive submissions. *Candida krusei* detections showed a continued **increasing trend** over recent quarters. Milk cultures also showed **increasing trends** in *Streptococcus chromogenes*, while *Streptococcus dysgalactiae* and *Staphylococcus simulans* were elevated but remained within control limits.

Across laboratories, mastitis pathogens showed gradual shifts in species distribution, with no major outbreaks reported.

4) Research updates

Johne's disease prevalence in beef herds. Dr. Cheryl Waldner, WCVM.

Johne's disease surveillance in western Canadian beef herds showed little change when fall 2025 data were compared with a 2019 study. Among 803 beef cow samples, about 0.9% tested positive, similar to 1.1% in 2019. At the herd level, 15% of herds had at least one positive animal in 2025 compared with 17% in 2019. Overall, results indicate that Johne's disease levels have remained relatively stable over the past six years. These findings support continued surveillance and control efforts, particularly in seedstock herds, where disease management remains important.

Management of Johne's-positive cattle continues to vary widely among producers. Herds with only a small number of positive animals can often be managed through targeted removal and ongoing monitoring. In contrast, herds with higher numbers of fecal PCR-positive animals present greater challenges, particularly in determining which animals are truly infectious. These situations make decisions around culling and segregation more complex and highlight the need for continued work to improve interpretation of test results and herd-level control strategies.

Alberta Feedlot Health and Welfare Surveillance System (AFHWS). Dr. Joyce VanDonkersgoed.

The AFHWS, in collaboration with local feedlot veterinary practices and the Government of Alberta, has begun developing a training program for foreign-licensed veterinarians who are not provincially licensed. The goal is to build a trained pool of personnel who could assist with emergency ante-mortem and post-mortem inspections in provincially inspected meat processing facilities. This initiative is intended to help maintain inspection capacity during periods of workforce shortage or other service disruptions.

- New: AFHWS infographics 2019 to 2023

5) Relevant news

Strychnine Emergency Use Registration for gopher (Richardson's Ground Squirrels) control in Alberta and Saskatchewan (Final decision). Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency has denied an emergency request to reintroduce strychnine for Richardson's ground squirrel (gopher) control in Alberta and Saskatchewan. The review concluded that the information submitted did not adequately address the safety concerns that led to strychnine's original cancellation. As a result, the product will not be available for emergency use.

This decision will remain in place from summer 2026 through November 2027.

A recent opinion piece in *The Western Producer* (2026) noted that current control methods, which involve placing bait in individual burrows, are labour-intensive and require significant time and effort in the field.

6) Scan of emerging and important diseases

i) Bovine tuberculosis (bTB) investigations (Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA, 2026). Status as of April 16, 2026:

- **Manitoba** (detection June 2025): 1 infected dairy herd depopulated. Index animal, no other positive cases.
- **Saskatchewan** (detection Nov. 2024): One infected beef herd depopulated. 27 confirmed cases
- **Saskatchewan** (detection June 2023): One infected beef herd depopulated. 32 confirmed cases

ii) Outbreak of Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease (EHD) in Northeast Oregon, Feb. 2026 (Oregon Department of Agriculture)

- Late-term abortions and weak ("dummy") calves were linked to EHD in beef cattle, with the virus confirmed in fetal tissues.
- EHD was also detected in deaths of white-tailed and mule deer in grazing areas used by affected cattle in fall 2025. Additional outbreaks in deer were reported in Grand Forks (BC) and several US states during the same period.
- The disease is spread by biting midges and can affect all cloven-hoofed animals, including cattle.
- Environmental and vector conditions may also increase the risk of bluetongue virus, which spreads in a similar way.

iii) Contagious Nodular Dermatosis "Lumpy skin disease" (LSD) in Europe

- Historically, LSD mainly occurred in sub-Saharan Africa, then spread to Africa and Asia and in 2025 to Europe (France, Italy and Spain).
- Additional outbreaks in Italy (April 2026) in a previously unaffected region occurred months after any reported cases, indicating either a new independent introduction or undetected viral persistence. (Plateforme ESA (in French)). CFIA Fact Sheet

iv) Foot and Mouth Disease FMD (SAT-1)

- FMD SAT-1 has been reported at unusually high levels in South Africa, with continued expansion through 2025 and 2026.
- New outbreaks were reported in Cyprus in February 2026, with additional cases confirmed since then.
- Greece (Lesvos Island) has reported 43 outbreaks since March 2026, marking a major resurgence after no cases since 1994. (WAHIS)
- Reports also indicate possible spread across parts of Russia and Central Asia, including Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and China. (Eurasianet, 2026; Beef)
- International animal health agencies, including WOAH and FAO, have issued alerts urging increased preparedness due to the ongoing spread of SAT-1.

v) New World screwworm (NWS)

- NWS cases in humans and animals (mainly cattle and dogs), continue to be reported in Mexico. SENASICA dashboard (in Spanish).
- First US detections since 1966 were confirmed in Texas and New Mexico (USDA Link), triggering livestock import restrictions for affected states.

vi) Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1.

- In Canada, no HPAI has been detected in dairy cattle to date. Testing of 9,281 raw milk samples at processing plants as of April 2, 2026 was negative.
- In Canadian poultry, 2 commercial and 3 non-commercial infected premises were reported between April 14 and May 1, 2026, all in Saskatchewan. (CFIA)
- A domestic cat in southeastern Saskatchewan tested positive for HPAI H5N1, after exposure to a wild goose carcass, and died within 72 hours following severe respiratory and neurological signs.
- In US dairy cattle, 5 new HPAI cases were reported between March 23 and April 22, 2026, bringing the total to 1,093 cases across 20 states, with ongoing bulk milk surveillance through the National Milk Testing Strategy. (LINK)
- In people in the US, 71 H5 influenza cases have been reported since 2024, with most linked to exposure to infected dairy cattle or poultry. No new cases.
- A report from CDC confirmed: **Serologic Evidence of HPAI (H5N1) Virus Infection in a Veterinary Professional Exposed to an Infected Domestic Cat.**

5) Producer takeaways

1. Respiratory disease remains the most important health problem in feedlot and beef cattle, mainly due to pneumonia. The main bacteria involved are still the same (*Mannheimia haemolytica, Pasteurella multocida, Histophilus somni*), but some cases are becoming harder to treat, and viral infections such as bovine herpesvirus-1 are being seen more often.
2. Calf scours and other digestive diseases continue at steady levels, with rotavirus, coronavirus, *E. coli,* and *Cryptosporidium* remaining the main causes. Johne's disease continues to be detected in some herds and shows a slow increase in certain groups of cattle, so ongoing herd monitoring remains important.
3. Abortions continue to be a complex problem with multiple possible causes. Some cases are linked to infections such as *Neospora caninum*, but results need careful interpretation, and feed-related problems or toxins can also play a major role when outbreaks occur.
4. New and emerging diseases remain a concern for cattle production systems, even if not currently present in Canada. These include diseases spread by insects or wildlife such as EHD; international spread of FMD SAT-1, risk of New World screwworm moving north, and continued HPAI H5N1 activity poultry and wild birds.

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