



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. The session brought together veterinarians, diagnosticians, researchers, and industry representatives. 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

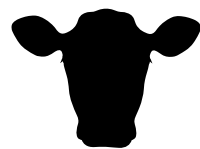
A beef herd of 60–80 cows had sudden deaths in several 350–400 lb calves after feed mill byproducts, including chicken feed, were introduced. Affected calves showed heart and nervous system signs such as fast heart rate and hindlimb weakness, and four calves died during investigation. Post-mortem findings showed heart tissue damage consistent with monensin exposure. Ionophore exposure can cause hidden heart damage and later death under stress, and collection of multiple muscle samples is recommended when toxicity is suspected.

In a separate case a pen of 200 feedlot heifers were off feed, drooling, and had tongue ulcers. Testing ruled out a feed related cause and major viral causes but was positive for *Mycoplasma bovis* in a respiratory panel test of pooled samples. The practitioner suspected poxvirus as the primary cause. The case highlights an unusual finding of *M. bovis* in mouth lesions and it's also a reminder for cattle handlers of the possible bite-related zoonotic risk from poxvirus infection.



Five abortions occurred in 65 purchased bred heifers with no clear environmental or feed cause. Testing on near-term fetuses detected *Neospora caninum* by PCR, but no matching lesions were seen on placentas or fetal tissues. Pathologist cautioned that PCR alone is not enough to confirm the cause, as low-level detection can occur in normal fetuses. Interpretation should combine lesions, timing of pregnancy, and herd-level patterns.

On a separate abortion investigation, 180 bred heifers fell ill with breathing difficulties, premature calving, red urine, and deaths after exposure to waste onions from selenium-rich soils. Post-mortem findings indicated red blood cell damage and organ injury consistent with toxic exposure. Elevated selenium intake and onion toxicity were both identified as key contributors, and abortions stopped within days after feed was corrected. The case highlights the importance of investigating all feed sources, including byproducts, during abortion events.



2) Syndromic Surveillance

Respiratory disease was dominated by **bronchopneumonia, fibrinous pneumonia, and interstitial pneumonia** and remained overall stable, although lameness and severity of disease appeared to increase in some herds. Key bacteria including *Mannheimia haemolytica*, *Pasteurella multocida*, and *Histophilus somni* were generally stable, but *M. haemolytica* and *H. somni* were reported as increasing in some cases with treatment failures. Bovine herpesvirus-1 increased compared with recent quarters, while BRSV and *M. bovis* returned to expected levels after earlier peaks. BRSV-associated interstitial pneumonia and increased.

Cardiovascular disease was mainly due to **myocarditis**, with reports suggesting an increase in cases involving *H. somni* and associated mortality in feedlot cattle. Laboratory findings included multiple myocarditis cases along with isolated cardiomyopathy and right-sided heart failure. Treatment challenges were also reported in cases involving *H. somni*-associated myocarditis, while overall patterns remained stable but concerning for some herds.

Digestive disease remained common and generally stable, led by **diarrhea** associated with *E. coli*, rotavirus, coronavirus, and *Cryptosporidium*. Bovine coronavirus detections increased and approached historical upper levels, while *Salmonella* Dublin was detected sporadically and remains of concern. Johne's disease monitoring showed a continued long-term increase in MAP, with confirmed cases this quarter. Other notable findings included hemorrhagic bowel syndrome and increased gastrointestinal inflammation, while overall trends remained within expected limits.

Reproductive disease continued to be dominated by **abortions**, with mostly sporadic infectious causes identified. Findings included *N. caninum*, *T. foetus*, BHV-1, and *Bacillus licheniformis*, with the latter continuing an increasing trend. Placentitis also showed a slight increase compared with previous years, although most abortion investigations remained within expected patterns.

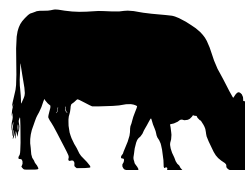
Musculoskeletal disease remained stable and driven by **lameness, arthritis, fractures**, and interdigital dermatitis, with occasional treatment failures reported. Laboratory diagnoses included blackleg, polyserositis, and myopathy, but no major shifts in trends were observed.

Neurological disease activity remained low and stable, with isolated cases of polioencephalopathy (polio) and meningoencephalitis identified through laboratory testing. No clear increases in specific pathogens or syndromes were observed.

Dermatological disease remained stable overall, with lice the most common external parasite and associated treatment failures reported in some herds. Occasional cases of bacterial dermatitis and squamous cell carcinoma were identified, with no major shifts in trend patterns.

Multisystemic disease was characterized by stable levels of septicemia and nutritional deficiencies. *E. coli*, *H. somni*, and *M. haemolytica* remained the main septicemia agents, with a slight increase in septicemia diagnoses compared with the previous quarter but still within expected levels. Johne's disease (MAP) continued a long-term increasing trend, and isolated cases of bacillary hemoglobinuria (*C. haemolyticum*) and *Anaplasma marginale* were identified.

Mastitis activity in beef cattle remained low overall, but milk culture monitoring showed increasing detections of *Candida krusei*, *S. simulans*, and *S. chromogenes*. *S. dysgalactiae* was higher than historical levels but remained within expected ranges, indicating localized increases without a broad system-wide shift.



3) Research Updates

Dr. Cheryl Waldner (WCVN) reported that updated surveillance shows Johne's disease levels in western Canadian beef herds have remained stable since 2019. Apparent seroprevalence was 0.9% in 2025 compared with 1.1% in 2019, and herd-level prevalence was similar at 15% versus 17%. These results support continued monitoring and control efforts, particularly in seedstock herds. Management of infected herds varies widely, and while low-level infections can often be managed through targeted removal and monitoring, interpretation of fecal PCR results and decisions in heavily affected herds remain challenging.

Dr. Joyce VanDonkersgoed reported that the Alberta Feedlot Health and Welfare Surveillance System, in collaboration with veterinary practices and government partners, has started a project to develop meat inspection training for foreign-licensed veterinarians not currently licensed in the province. The program aims to build a trained workforce capable of supporting emergency ante-mortem and post-mortem inspections in provincially inspected facilities during periods of workforce shortage or other disruptions.
New: updated AFHWS [infographics](#) 2019-2023

4) Relevant news

Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) has denied a request for emergency use of strychnine to control Richardson's ground squirrels in Alberta and Saskatchewan. The decision was based on a review that found the submitted information did not adequately address previously identified risks to the environment and non-target species that led to cancellation of strychnine use. This restriction will remain in place from late summer 2026 through November 2027. [Final decision](#)

5) Emerging and important diseases

Bovine tuberculosis investigations in western Canada are ongoing. In Manitoba, one infected dairy herd detected in 2025 was depopulated and no additional cases were found beyond the index animal. In Saskatchewan, completed investigations identified 27 cases linked to a 2024 outbreak and 32 cases linked to a 2023 outbreak ([CFIA, 2026](#)).

Epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) was confirmed in beef cattle in northeastern [Oregon](#) following late-term abortions and abnormal calves. Fetal testing confirmed infection, and nearby deer deaths from EHD had been detected in affected grazing areas in fall 2025. The event reinforces the risk of midge-borne diseases such as EHD and bluetongue following wildlife outbreaks. ([Beacon](#))

Lumpy skin disease (LSD) continues to spread in Europe. After outbreaks in France, Italy, and Spain in 2025, new cases were reported in Italy in 2026. The timing of new cases months after earlier outbreaks suggests either new introductions or undetected virus persistence.

Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) SAT-1 is expanding in [South Africa](#) and beyond Africa, with outbreaks reported in [Cyprus](#), and [Greece](#), where 43 outbreaks have been reported since March 2026. Further spread into Eurasia has triggered international alerts from WOA and FAO, emphasizing the need for preparedness and surveillance.

New World screwworm continues to circulate in [Mexico](#), with most cases in cattle and dogs.

The first US detections since 1966 were confirmed in Texas and New Mexico ([USDA Link](#)), triggering livestock [import restrictions](#).

Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) H5N1 remains active in North America. No infections have been detected in Canadian cattle, and over 9,000 [milk samples tested negative](#). In Canada, poultry outbreaks were limited to Saskatchewan, including a fatal infection in a [domestic cat](#) linked to wild bird exposure. In the United States, five new dairy herd cases were reported after a four-month pause, bringing the total to 1,093 across 20 states. Poultry outbreaks continue, with no new human cases since 2024, although most past infections were linked to infected dairy cattle or poultry exposure.

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 abortion storms 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 avian influenza HPAI H5N1 activity in poultry and wild birds.

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

