Western Canadian Animal Health Network

WECAHN DAIRY NETWORK PRODUCER REPORT

JANUARY - MARCH 2026

The WeCAHN Dairy Network held a quarterly videoconference meeting on May 7th, 2026, to discuss animal health events from January to March 2026 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: 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) Research update: Presentation by Dr. Shaukat on contagious mastitis trends in Alberta dairy herds

- Bulk tank milk samples from Alberta dairy herds were collected three times in 2021-2022 as part of the Alberta Cattle Health Surveillance System (CHeSS). The study tested for contagious mastitis bacteria: *Staphylococcus aureus, Streptococcus agalactiae* and *Mycoplasma bovis*.
- The study estimated that 57.0% of herds were positive for *S. aureus* at least once over a year. The *S. aureus* prevalence (proportion of the herd infected) ranged from 11% to 18%, while *S. agalactiae* and *M. bovis* were below 5%.
- Larger herds and northern Alberta herds were more often positive for *S. aureus*.
- Herds with mean bulk tank somatic cell counts above 200,000 were more likely to have the bacteria than herds with counts below 100,000.
- Bulk tank somatic cell count patterns varied by management and region. Automatic milking system herds had a higher median bulk tank somatic cell count of 175,000 compared with less than 150,000 in conventional herds. Southern Alberta herds averaged 11% lower counts than other regions, and Hutterite colony farms consistently had lower counts than non-colony farms.
- Discussion among network members noted that *S. agalactiae* has declined over time with improved dairy hygiene and management, while *S. aureus* remains more difficult to control because it is contagious, can cause chronic infections, and in some cases is not treatable.
- Collaborative work with veterinarians and stakeholders is planned to discuss broader findings and develop industry-level recommendations.
- About 130 producers currently receive CHeSS surveillance reports, with options to share data with veterinarians; Alberta producers can visit this LINK or contact Dr. Waseem Shaukat at waseem.shaukat@ucalgary.ca for more information.

ii) Case study: Severe pneumonia and mastitis associated with *M. Bovis*

- **History:** A practitioner reported a severe, rapidly progressing *M. bovis* outbreak in a 170-cow dairy herd in early March. 12 cows died or were culled, and another 18 cows required treatment for pneumonia. Affected cows had high fevers, laboured breathing, hard, swollen, painful quarters with watery milk and reduced milk production. Swollen joints, which are usually observed with *M. bovis* infections, were not seen in this case.
- **Diagnosis:** Diagnostic work included two post-mortem examinations, deep nasopharyngeal swabs, and milk culture and PCR testing. The pathologist concluded there was a possible prior bovine respiratory syncytial virus (BRSV) or parainfluenza type 3 (PI-3) infection, which may have compromised the immune system. Also possibly compromising the immune system were high mycotoxin levels in the corn bunker, which had been opened 4 weeks before the clinical signs (CFIA regulatory guidance on contaminants in feed, including mycotoxins).
- **Treatment:** Management changes included reducing corn silage in the ration and doubling the rate of mycotoxin binders. Treatment was changed from trimethoprim sulfa to oxytetracycline. These changes resulted in a 50% to 60% success rate in clearing the pneumonia and mastitis.
- **Follow Up:** Within three to four days after the treatments, fewer cows were sick. The farm has since introduced a colostrum pasteurizer and vaccination protocols for calves, as part of longer-term *M. bovis* herd infection management.
- **Discussion:** The practitioner advised the producer that returning to a low-risk *M. bovis* herd status would likely take multiple years.

3) Syndromic Surveillance

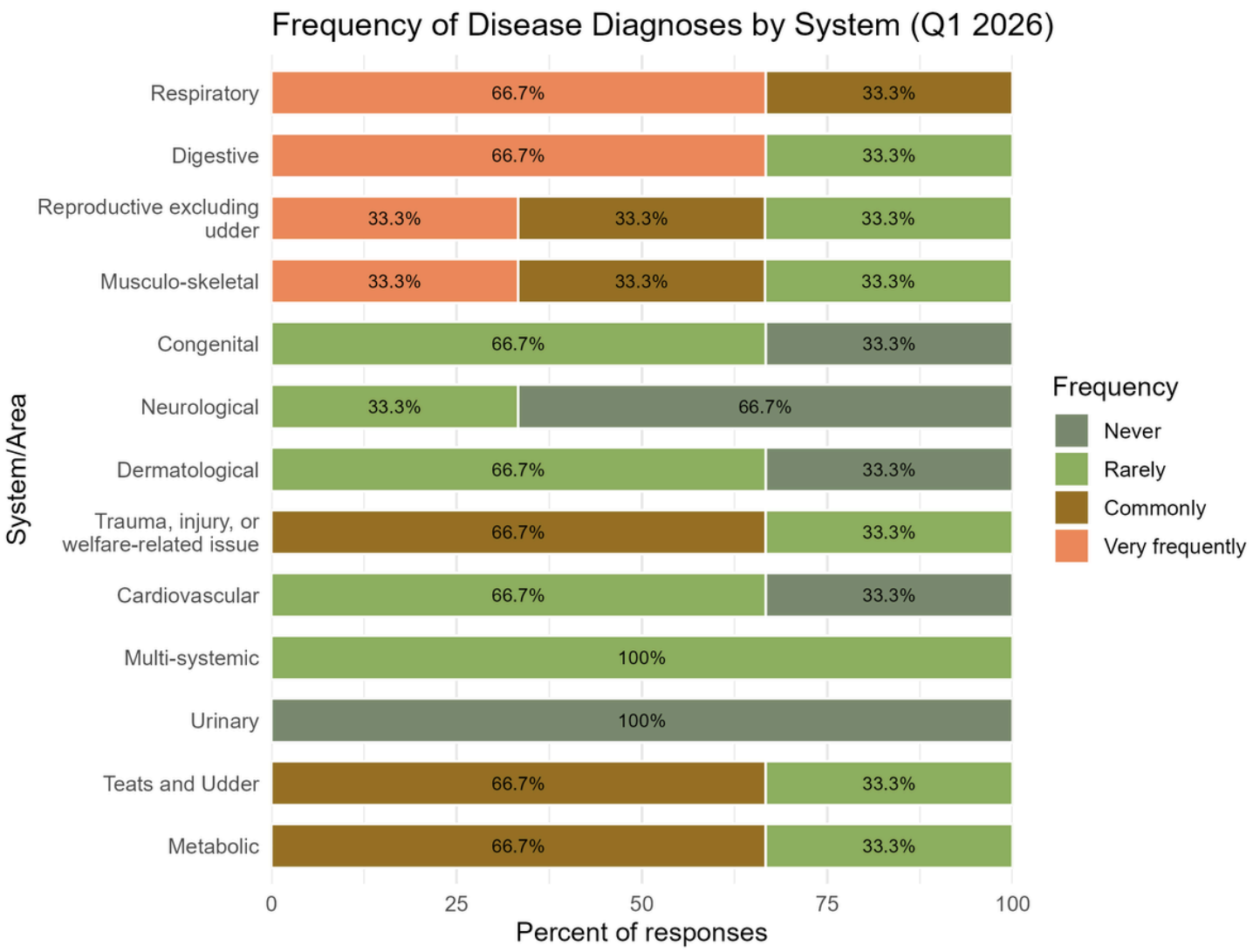
Important information:

Clinical impressions 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.



Respiratory system disease

Clinical impressions survey and laboratory diagnostic results

- Bronchopneumonia was reported **Never** to Commonly to **Very frequently**.
  - *Mannheimia haemolytica* was reported **Rarely**, and **Stable**.
  - *M. bovis* was reported **Never** to **Very frequently**, and **Stable** to **Increasing**.
- Interstitial pneumonia was reported **Rarely** to **Commonly**.
  - BRSV was reported **Rarely** and **Increasing**.
- Undifferentiated pneumonia was reported **Never** to **Rarely** to **Commonly**.

The identification of certain viruses and bacteria that cause respiratory disease (e.g., bovine herpesvirus 1) was higher this quarter than in historical records. Other respiratory viruses and bacteria (e.g., *Histophilus somni*) were detected much less frequently after a peak noted in Q4 2025.

Digestive system disease

Clinical impressions survey and laboratory diagnostic results

- Diarrhea was reported Commonly.
  - *E. coli*, rotavirus, and cryptosporidia were reported Rarely to Commonly, and **Stable**.
  - Coronavirus was reported **Never** to Commonly, and **Stable**.
  - Clostridia were reported Rarely to Commonly, and **Stable** to **Increasing**.
- Dysentery was reported **Never** to Commonly.
- Winter dysentery was reported Commonly, and **Increasing**.
- Abomasal disease was reported Commonly to Very frequently.
- Jejunal hemorrhage syndrome was reported **Never** to Commonly.
- *M. avium* ssp. paratuberculosis (MAP or Johne's disease), gas bloat, liver disease, gastrointestinal parasites, traumatic reticuloperitonitis (TRP or hardware disease), and vagal indigestion were reported **Never** to Rarely.

The identification of bacteria and viruses that cause diarrhea and other digestive system diseases was stable this quarter.

Reproduction system disease

Clinical impressions survey and laboratory diagnostic results

- Abortions and infectious infertility, including *Campylobacter,* were reported **Never** to Rarely.
- Diseases of the uterus and ovaries were reported Very frequently.
- Male reproductive disease, bull reproductive injuries, and non-infectious infertility were reported **Never**.
- An abortion outbreak in a dry cow pen was reported, affected mostly heifers, and was associated with *Salmonella* Dublin.

The number of abortions investigated was stable this quarter. *Neospora caninum* antibodies were detected in 7 dairy cattle cases.

Musculoskeletal system disease

Clinical impressions survey and laboratory diagnostic results

- Foot disease and sole ulcer were reported **Never** to Commonly, and **Stable**.
- Digital dermatitis was reported Rarely to Very frequently, and **Stable**.
- Foot rot was reported Commonly, and **Stable**.
- Interdigital hyperplasia, sole hemorrhage, and post-calving injuries were reported **Never** to Rarely, and **Stable**.
- White line disease was reported **Never** to Commonly, and **Stable**.
- Arthritis, any cause, was reported Rarely to Commonly, and **Stable**.
- Fractures were reported Rarely, and **Stable**.

Injury or other welfare-related disease

Clinical impressions survey

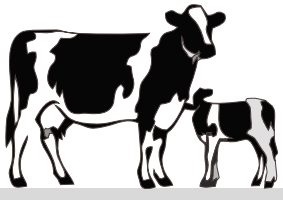
- Traumatic injury was reported Rarely to Very frequently.
- Frostbite was reported **Never** to Rarely.

Multisystemic and metabolic diseases

Clinical impressions survey and laboratory diagnostic results

- Hypocalcemia and ketosis were reported Very frequently.
- Hepatic lipidosis was reported Rarely.

At PDS, across cattle commodities, the trend of increasing Johne's disease PCR detections continued. In dairy cattle, Johne's disease antibodies were reported once, and 3 PCR detections were reported. Across cattle commodities, septicemia cases were higher than the historical record.



Mastitis

Clinical impressions survey and laboratory diagnostic results

- Acute mastitis was reported **Commonly** to **Very frequently**.
  - *E. coli* and *Klebsiella* spp. were reported **Rarely** to **Commonly**, and **Stable**.
  - *M. bovis* and *Strep. uberis* were reported **Never** to **Commonly**, and **Stable** to **Increasing**.
  - *S. aureus* was reported **Rarely**, and **Stable** to **Increasing**.
  - *S. dysgalactiae* was reported **Rarely**, and **Stable**.
- Chronic mastitis was reported **Rarely** to **Very frequently**.
  - *S. aureus* was reported **Rarely** to **Very frequently**, and **Stable** to **Increasing**.
  - *S. uberis* was reported **Never** to **Commonly**, and **Stable**.
  - *S. dysgalactiae* was reported **Never** to **Rarely**, and **Stable**.
  - Traumatic teat and udder injuries were reported **Rarely**.

Staph. and *Strep*. bacteria that cause mastitis were within control limits at the laboratories.

4) Scan and other updates

- Bovine tuberculosis (bTB) investigation in Manitoba dairy herd (Canadian Food Inspection Agency [CFIA, 2026]) update as of April 16, 2026.
- Bluetongue (Epizootic Hemorrhagic Disease [EHD]) was confirmed in Oregon in Feb. 2026 after an unusual increase in late-term abortions and the birth of dummy calves in beef cattle (Oregon Department of Agriculture).
- Lumpy skin disease expanded in Europe, with additional outbreaks in a previously unaffected region of Italy (Plateforme ESA [in French]). See the CFIA Fact Sheet
- Foot and mouth disease (SAT-1) continues to spread in Europe, and activity is suspected in Russia and parts of Asia (Eurasianet, 2026); WOAH and FAO called for enhanced preparedness.
- New World screwworm has recently expanded westward in Mexico (dashboard LINK [Spanish])
- Canada has detected no HPAI in cattle, with 9,281 raw milk samples negative (CFIA, 2026). The U.S. reported five new dairy cattle cases after four months without detections (LINK).

5) Producer takeaways

1. *Staph. aureus* mastitis is common, can be spread between cows and can develop into chronic infections. Create a plan to manage *Staph. aureus* mastitis in cows with your herd veterinarian. Keep a list of cows with mastitis and update it regularly to help decide which cows should be treated, milked last, segregated, dried off, or culled.
2. *Mycoplasma bovis* is a long-term herd problem, and there is no quick fix even with antibiotics. Build a long-term control plan with your veterinarian that includes vaccinating calves and pasteurizing colostrum.
3. Recent lab results showed higher-than-usual activity for winter 2026 for several respiratory viruses, for example, BRSV. If you notice more coughing, fevers, laboured breathing, treatment failures, or a drop in milk production, call your veterinarian promptly. Use testing to confirm what viruses and bacteria are circulating.

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