



The WeCAHN Smallholder Network held a quarterly videoconference meeting on March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2026, to discuss animal health events from October to December 2025. The session brought together veterinarians, diagnosticians, researchers, and industry representatives. Data were synthesized from clinical impression 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).



## 1) Interesting cases

- **Presentation on lead poisoning** by Dr. Erickson, WCVN. Lead poisoning in Western Canadian cattle, mainly from chewing discarded batteries, causes loss of coordination, blindness, seizures, and sudden death. Calves tend to be affected more than adults due to their curious behaviour and ability to reach into tight spaces. Testing policies vary by province, and repeated tests are needed because lead clears the body slowly.
- **Case study:** Small flock with co-infection of infectious coryza and infectious bronchitis. A similar outbreak was seen in commercial flocks in 2024. Birds showed severe swelling of the head and eyes, nasal discharge and a noticeable drop in egg production. Bird shortages led producers to source from multiple suppliers, increasing disease risk.
- **Case study:** A backyard hen with severe weight loss, breathing issues, and oral wounds was diagnosed with a rare tongue tumour. Other infectious causes, like *Trichomonas*, were ruled out.
- **Highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI):** No HPAI has been detected in Canadian dairy cattle, and all tested milk samples were negative ([LINK](#)). In poultry, recent detections occurred on 26 farms between December and March 2026 ([LINK](#)).

## 2) Syndromic surveillance

- **Small poultry flocks:** Veterinary practitioners reported stable health issues. One practitioner reported a case of infectious coryza. A duck was diagnosed with avian influenza (H5), a backyard pet chicken with ILT and a case of Marek's disease.
- **Small flocks of small ruminants:** A veterinary practitioner reported that most clinical conditions had decreasing trends. A 5-year-old neutered pet goat was diagnosed with bacterial enteritis, yersiniosis, abscesses and swollen lymph nodes. A Suffolk sheep was diagnosed with silica bladder stones.
- **Small herds of swine:** No submissions were reported for laboratory diagnosis during this period.



## 3) Scan and other updates

- In BC, the most common diseases in small poultry flocks were yolk peritonitis and Marek's disease ([Disease Detection Program for Smallholders](#)).
- Manitoba is expanding outreach to small producers through a new quarterly newsletter, monthly webinars, and hands-on workshops, and is working to centralize online resources for easier access across species.
- Control of *Cysticercus ovis* in sheep is managed with dog deworming for *Taenia ovis*. AB lamb resources: [factsheet](#) and comprehensive [Health module](#).
- In small ruminants, a practitioner reported an unusual outbreak of septicemic pasteurellosis in pasture lambs.
- Copper deficiencies were identified as an important risk factor for disease in small ruminant flocks.

- Reminder not to feed food waste to pigs due to African swine fever risk ([CFIA](#)).
- Two cases of theileriosis were reported in Ontario cattle in Nov 2025 ([LINK](#)). The longhorned tick that carries the *Theileria* is not established in Canada. [CAHSS recorded webinar](#)
- No new avian influenza cases were reported in U.S. dairy cattle in early 2026 ([LINK](#)). Poultry HPAI outbreaks continue, affecting both commercial and small flocks ([LINK](#)).
- In Europe, avian influenza milk antibodies were reported in cows in the Netherlands after the farm cats became ill and died ([LINK](#)). Vaccination trials in turkeys in England ([gov.uk](#)).
- Sheep and goat pox are spreading across several European countries, with high levels in Greece ([LINK](#)).
- Lumpy skin disease remains a concern in Europe ([DEFRA](#)).
- Newcastle disease continues to spread in Europe, with cases in Poland, Germany, and Spain ([WATTPoultry](#)). Outbreaks are occurring even in vaccinated flocks.
- Foot and mouth disease was detected in Greece in March 2026, affecting cattle and sheep ([WAHIS](#)), with control measures including culling and movement restrictions in a 5 km zone.
- African swine fever continues to spread in wild boar across Europe ([DEFRA](#)).
- Biosecurity resources for smallholders are available at [animalhealthcanada.ca](#).



## Producer takeaways

1. Lead toxicosis remains a consistent and preventable issue in grazing cattle, with young calves at highest risk. Regulatory requirements and testing vary across the provinces: reportable in BC and AB, voluntary follow-up testing in MB, and a plan is under development in SK.
2. Sourcing birds from multiple or uncertain suppliers increases the risk of introducing infectious diseases, making strong biosecurity and supplier selection essential. Many poultry infections look the same, so consult your veterinarian to diagnose the disease and develop a management and treatment plan.
3. Feeding pigs food waste or table scraps increases the risk of serious diseases like African swine fever and should be avoided. It is especially relevant where emerging and foreign animal diseases continue to evolve globally.

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