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UCD VET VIEWS
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THE CALIFORNIA TRICHOMONIASIS CONTROL PROGRAM

Last month, your local cattlemen's association was mailed a draft trichomoniasis control program for California. This draft program is the product of over four years of work by the CCA's Trichomoniasis Working Group. The state legislation necessary to enable this program was passed last year and signed in law (AB 1782). This legislation was sponsored by CCA and not only included the provisions for a Trichomoniasis control program, it also established a cattle health advisory board that will directly advise the Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture on matters of importance to cattlemen and their livestock. Please take the opportunity to review the draft program and make comments to your local association, the CCA, or through other appropriate channels.

The draft document has the following general features:

1. The routine testing of California bulls will continue to be on a voluntary basis.
2. Education of veterinarians and producers will be an important feature of the program.
3. Veterinarians will be certified for purposes of taking samples from bulls. This will help standardize this procedure on a statewide basis.
4. All laboratories processing the samples and reading the tests will be certified.
5. All positive samples will be confirmed at the state veterinary diagnostic laboratory (CAHFS). The confirmatory test costs will be funded by the CDFA.
6. Confirmed positive herds will be notified and the CDFA Animal Health Branch will also be notified. Additionally, CDFA veterinarians will notify owners of neighboring herds. Test positive bulls will be individually identified.
7. The disposition of test positive bulls will be standardized and the working group has identified two possible options. Note: only one option will eventually be part of the rule.
 - A. Bulls sold at public auction must have an official negative test report or must be sold for slaughter only.
 - B. Bulls sold at public auction must have an official negative test report or must be sold as "Maximum Potential Risk" of having Trichomoniasis.
1. Bulls imported into California must be tested negative for Trichomoniasis prior to entering the state. There will be a few exemptions for this rule (commuter bulls in pasture-to-pasture permit herds, bulls for AI studs, rodeo or exhibition bulls).
2. The cattle industry will review the entire program on a yearly basis and make recommendations for revising or eliminating the program.

The workgroup focused on developing coordinated options for the control of Trichomoniasis that are based on sound scientific information, that will have the possibility for widespread producer support, will have identifiable benefits, and when implemented, will reduce Trichomoniasis in beef cattle in California. Several interesting facts were brought out during the discussions that are listed below.

Transmission of Trichomoniasis

1. In a 1990 survey of beef herds in California, approximately 16% of the herds were found to be infected and larger herds were more likely to be infected than smaller herds. Current levels of Trichomoniasis in California herds are not known.

2. Bulls can become infected within as little as 24 hours of breeding an infected cow.
3. Leasing, buying, and/or borrowing mature bulls of unknown Trichomoniasis history is very risky in terms of introducing Trichomoniasis into a herd.

Diagnosis of Trichomoniasis

1. Current methods of sampling and culturing bulls for Trichomoniasis identify about 90% of the positive bulls on the first test.
2. Bulls should be sexually rested before testing; otherwise, false negative tests (test is negative when the bull is a positive carrier) are likely. Breeding removes most of the organisms from the bull's reproductive tract and the test is negative. It is recommended that bulls be sexually rested at least 10 days before testing.
3. False positive test results do occur, particularly important in young bulls or virgin bulls. Therefore, confirmation of positive test results is necessary.

Prevention of Trichomoniasis

1. The current Trichomoniasis vaccines do not prevent infection of the bull, the cows, or the herd. The vaccines cause the cow to clear the infection much faster after they have become infected with the Trichomoniasis organism. The vaccine is helpful in reducing economic losses in infected herds or at-risk herds.
2. Prevention requires a coordinated program to be successful. There is no one easy answer.

A large number of options for Trichomoniasis control programs were discussed at the workgroup meetings. There was not a large amount of support for mandatory testing of all bulls in the state on a yearly basis, as is done in the Idaho control program. Some of the advantages and disadvantages of the draft program are listed below.

- ***Education***

An educational effort aimed at cow-calf producers, purebred producers, veterinarians, and bull sales organizations will be initiated. This program will be patterned after the CCA Quality Assurance Program. Current factual information will be organized into a standardized educational program. When a local association wishes to put on a Trichomoniasis educational program, this material will be available.

Advantages:

relatively inexpensive, voluntary program, no regulations involved.

Disadvantages:

the people whose cattle may be spreading the disease may not show up for the educational programs.

- ***Voluntary Testing/Reportable Disease***

Confirmed positive test results would be reported to the owner, the veterinarian, the CDFA, and neighboring herds.

Advantages: relatively inexpensive, voluntary program with the exception of reporting and notification of neighbors, data could be used to prioritize Trichomoniasis disease research, data could be used to track the progress of preventive programs on a statewide or local basis, neighbors would be notified of positive results so they could consider testing to identify Trichomoniasis in their herds at a much earlier time than would occur normally. This would be an economic advantage for neighboring herds.

Disadvantages: Veterinarians or laboratories would have to report positive results, CDFA would take action to notify neighbors of positive herds and this could have a negative impact on herds with Trichomoniasis.

- ***Mandatory Testing of Imported Bulls***

Bulls coming into California would have to be tested for Trichomoniasis. There would be some exemptions to the testing requirements, i.e., young bulls (< 18 months old), rodeo bulls, bulls for studs, commuter bulls, etc.

Advantages: Keep positive bulls from coming into state.

Disadvantages: Mandatory testing of bulls, possible problems with certification of testing methods and laboratories in other states.

Please take the time to review the draft proposal sent to your local association. Your comments and suggestions are very important. Contact Susan LaGrande at CCA headquarters, your local association officers, or me with your ideas, comments and suggestions for improvement.

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