

## **TUBERCULOSIS TESTING FOR CATTLE AT THE MINNESOTA STATE FAIR**

In 2007, The Minnesota State Fair will require all cattle (beef and dairy) over six months of age be tested negative for tuberculosis. The exact wording of the requirement is as follows.

### **MINNESOTA STATE FAIR HEALTH REGULATIONS 2007 CATTLE SHOW**

**Bovine Tuberculosis – All cattle in all divisions must be tested negative for bovine tuberculosis (TB) within 60 days of the first day of the exhibition. Health papers indicating the negative test must accompany the cattle and turned in at the superintendent's office prior to stalling the cattle in the barn.**

**Exceptions:**

**-Cattle under six months of age.**

**-Cattle that originate from an accredited tuberculosis free herd if the animal is accompanied by a certificate of veterinary inspection that includes the TB-free herd certification number of the herd of origin and the date on which the herd of origin was last tested for tuberculosis.**

This is a change for 4-H. Last year State Fair 4-H cattle did not need to be tested for TB. Required TB testing has several ramifications that are unique to 4-H families. This communication will attempt to identify these situations and offer potential strategies to assist with compliance.

As you may know, testing for TB is a 72 hour process. A shot is first given by a veterinarian to the animal. The results of the shot must be read or palpated by that same veterinarian three days (72 hours) later. Animals testing negative are then issued the appropriate health certificate required for State Fair exhibition.

Due to the timing of each county fair and the possibility of a false positive TB test result, 4-H families/staff/volunteers participating at the Minnesota State Fair need to carefully think through how and when they will comply with the TB expectations.

First, note that this is a State Fair requirement only. We do not expect County Fairs to require TB testing for local exhibition. The only exception to this would be 4 counties in the northern part of Minnesota who were affected by the initial TB break a couple of years ago – those counties know who they are.

Next, counties with earlier fairs (those ending by August 4<sup>th</sup>) will more than likely simply let State Fair cattle trip winners know they must have a negative TB test prior to coming to State Fair. When doing so, be sure they are aware of the timeline (72 hours) to get a reading on the test. Also, be clear that there can and will be NO tolerance for lax deadlines. Counties with fairs ending on or before Sunday, August 5<sup>th</sup> will need to bring all TB health papers to final registration, so the turn around time to get the animals tested and the health papers to the Extension Office is quite short. 4-H staff should provide clear timelines to State Fair Cattle families so that all TB health papers can be presented by 4-H staff at final registration.

I'm meeting with State Fair Staff, State Fair Vets and State Fair Superintendents for FFA, Open Class Beef and Open Class Dairy to determine the timeline and system we will use to collect and turn TB health papers over to fair vets. The outcome of this meeting, scheduled for early May, will be communicated as soon as they are known. But counties with fairs ending after August 5<sup>th</sup> will have a different process and timeline than final registration. I will provide these details to 4-H staff when it is clearer but technically, animals should not enter the State Fair barns until health papers are turned in and approved by the State Fair Vets. We will work on a system to make this as user friendly as possible for these late county fairs. The variables of some county livestock coming on the same truck or semi while others arrive individually will make this difficult; but we will clearly communicate expectations so that each family will know how to comply.

Counties with fairs ending after August 5<sup>th</sup> need to be clear with State Fair families that the timeline is critical and that there is no tolerance for anything less than an official health paper. Each county with a late fair will need to develop and communicate a workable system to their State Fair participants. The vet that gives the initial shot must be the same vet that reads the test 72 hours later. This "given" might have a bearing on how late counties proceed. Even though the official fair vet might seem like a logical choice to do TB testing, counties should consider whether that person would be available to do the 72 hour reads and issue results for all with very little turn around time. Fairs ending Sunday, August 12 have a little more wiggle room, but fairs ending the weekend of August 18 or 19 have hardly any flexibility in timing. Counties with late fairs will each need to develop a workable plan unique to them. Talking points to consider with fair partners (4-H staff, 4-H families with cattle trips, truckers vets, etc.) include:

- When do State Fair Trips need to be accepted in the county?
- Could this date and time be moved ahead and still be do-able for 4-H staff and 4-H families?
- When must the first test be done in order to insure a 72 hour read, in time for a Wednesday loadout to State Fair? Be sure to allow enough time for the paperwork to happen and the health paper to be issued.
- What vet will do the testing? – fair vet or personal vet – remember that both the initial shot and the 72 hour read must be done by the same vet.
- Can reductions in normal fees be negotiated with vets?
- Be clear about the final timeline with all cattle families!

It is crucial that the results of these discussions be clearly communicated to all families with State Fair cattle trips.

#### FALSE-POSITIVES

We are told that 3-5% of the cattle population will have a "false-positive" reading. This means they have tested positive, but do not have TB. False-positives are immediately reported to Regional Vets and need to be retested using a somewhat more specific TB test. The retest will take an estimated 2-3 weeks, so animals from later county fairs that have a false positive test will simply not be able to be exhibited at the State Fair. Additionally, herds with a false-positive test are quarantined until the retest is successfully completed with a negative test. Unfortunately, no animals from quarantined herds can be exhibited at State Fair during the quarantine period. Discussion of false-

positives and the resulting consequences should be articulated honestly to 4-H cattle families, but this discussion should not happen in a way that overly alarms families to the level that they do not feel comfortable in taking a State Fair cattle trip or testing for TB. The results of a false-positive test can be devastating for a 4-Hers that is really looking forward to the trip. There is nothing we can do to get around these seemingly stiff consequences and it is best to be up front about the possibilities of a false positive test. They are no ones fault –they sometimes just happen. That is a reality that is sometimes hard for a 4-H family to understand and accept.

The Minnesota State Fair will probably require TB testing until we regain our TB free status. I'm told by our State Veterinarian that this may take 2-5 years or longer even if everything falls into place. Thus we will all need to work together to develop workable plans and articulate expectations to 4-H cattle families – both new and old. We should also remember that testing for TB is something that was already done last year at the State Fair for all open class and FFA cattle. 4-H is not being singles out – in fact we were granted extra latitude last year. Additionally, most cattle breeders who participate at regional or national levels understand that TB testing is a common expectation when show mingles cattle from several states.

Finally, 50% the cost of testing for TB is tax deductible. Additional information on this deduction can be obtained from local veterinarians or 4-H staff. Questions or clarifications to State Fair TB testing can be forwarded to me.

Thank you in advance to all partners for your cooperation and attention to critical timelines.

Prepared April, 2007 by Brad Rugg