



Texas Association of Dairymen

For Immediate Release

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DAIRY INDUSTRY SUPPORTS NEW TB TESTING REGULATIONS

State rules will help ensure safety of Texas dairy herds

Texas consumers and dairy farmers can feel more secure about the health of dairy cattle and the safety of dairy products under new rules designed to keep tuberculosis-infected dairy cows out of Texas, according to the Texas Association of Dairymen.

The new rules, recently adopted by the Texas Animal Health Commission, will take effect March 18.

“We welcome and, in fact, encouraged these new testing requirements,” said John Cowan, executive director of the Texas Association of Dairymen. “Dairy farmers want to know that any new cows they buy from out-of-state won’t infect their herd. We also want consumers to feel more secure about the safety of the food they buy, even though milk pasteurization and other measures are designed to kill bacteria before it reaches the store shelves.”

The Animal Health Commission began a statewide TB testing program for dairy cows after two infected herds diagnosed in 2001 caused Texas to lose its U.S. Department of Agriculture’s TB-free designation.

As a result, every dairy cow in Texas – 336,000 head at 809 dairies – has been tested for tuberculosis. An infected herd was found in Hamilton County and subsequently depopulated.

“As Texas has learned, ‘free’ status is no foolproof barrier to disease,” Cowan said. “These more stringent testing requirements are welcomed by dairy farmers who want to protect the health of their herds, on which they depend to make a living.”

Previously, dairy cows were allowed into Texas if they tested negative for TB within 60 days of entry or were from a USDA TB-free designated state. Some cows from those states, however, were diagnosed with TB.

Under the new regulations, most dairy cows will be required to test negative for TB within 60 days before enter Texas. Young dairy heifers and bull calves brought into Texas will have to be identified with an ear tag and restricted at a designated facility until they test negative for TB at six months of age.

Exempt from these new regulations are dairy cattle that originate from herds tested yearly under a TB-accreditation program, neutered dairy cattle being fed for slaughter and dairy cows directly delivered to slaughter. Instead, these animals must have a certificate of veterinary inspection issued within 30 days prior to movement.

In addition to Texas, 33 other states require TB tests before allowing dairy cows into their borders, even if the cows are coming from a designated TB-free state.

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The Texas Association of Dairymen (www.milk4texas.org) is a non-profit corporation comprised of dairy cooperatives whose members are individual milk producers in Texas.