

Cattle producers face tougher brucellosis testing in 1982

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Unrestricted cattle shipping may come to a screeching halt next New Year's Day, according to a U.S. Department of Agriculture veterinarian.

"Producers now enjoying unrestricted shipping of their cattle may find their state no longer qualifies for testing exemptions next January," said Paul Becton.

Becton is director of the national brucellosis eradication program for USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

By next New Year's Day, new state classifications, along with more stringent testing to ship breeding cattle, will go into effect, he said.

"Cattle producers can do something now, however, to keep shipping cattle without any problem," Becton said. "If you raise and sell breeding cattle, stocker cattle or dairy herd replacements, you can get your herd certified free of brucellosis."

Then, it won't matter what classification your state has — you can ship with no testing requirements.

To be certified, a herd must test negative twice, with 10 to 14 months between tests, Becton said.

To maintain this status, the herd must be tested every year.

"Producers must also follow good management practices," Becton said. "All cattle over six months of age, with the exception of steers and spayed heifers, must be included in each herd test."

Such testing is normally done by a private veterinarian. In outbreak areas, however, where extensive testing is being done by animal health officials, the first herd test may be done at government expense.

"You're likely to find the cost of certifying a herd is a small price to pay for knowing you're free of this easily-spread disease," said Becton. "Not only will you be able to sell cattle whenever you want with no pre-testing, but buyers often pay premium prices for cattle from certified-free herds."

Brucellosis, sometimes called Bang's disease, is an infectious, bacterial disease of cattle and other animals that can be transmitted to humans. In livestock, it causes abortions, lowered milk yields and breeding problems.

Eradicating brucellosis is a cooperative state-federal program, Becton said. Minimum standards for states to follow are issued by USDA and are based on

recommendations of the U.S. Animal Health Association, an organization representing state animal health agencies and various producer groups.

"At the request of the association, a technical commission did a 30-month study of the entire program," Becton said. "Based on the commission's 1978 report, the association recommended extensive changes designed to augment detection of disease, improve handling of infected herds, bolster resistance to disease in cattle and reduce spread."

Many recommended changes are already in effect, he said. However, the reclassification of states and the tightening of certain shipping controls are targeted for January 1, 1982. This is to allow state animal health agencies and individual producers additional time to prepare for the stricter standards.

Current brucellosis shipping rules are largely based on county classifications. Counties are classified as certified free, modified certified or noncertified. All counties in 31 states are now certified free. To qualify, a county must have no infection at time of certification and a herd infection

rate less than one percent during the preceding 18 months.

Beginning next year, however, county classifications will be dropped and movement restrictions will rest on statewide A, B and C classifications, Becton said.

"To be Class A, a state must have no brucellosis-infected herds for 12 months," Becton said. "Outbreaks caused by imported cattle that result in no spread to other herds will not count against the 12 months nor cause a status loss."

"Right now, it appears only 10 to 12 states will qualify as Class A by the first of next year. A like number may qualify a few months later. It's evident, however, that the tighter shipping rules accompanying the 1982 state classifications will affect a good many cattle producers."

Animals subject to testing include nonvaccinated cattle over 18 months of age, vaccinated beef cattle over 24 months of age; and vaccinated dairy cattle over 20 months of age. Steers and spayed heifers are exempt.

Currently, breeding cattle must have a negative test within 30 days

before moving from modified-certified or noncertified counties, Becton said. For interstate shipment, they can only move under a permit issued by the importing state. They are then quarantined and retested 45 to 120 days after arrival.

"By January 1, 1982, only cattle from Class A state will be allowed to move without pre-testing," Becton said. "To move from or within Class B states, cattle will need a negative test within 30 days before movement unless they are from a certified-free herd. To move from or within Class C states, cattle will need two negative tests at 60-day intervals before movement unless they are from a certified-free herd."

"These rules are designed to protect the great majority of cattle owners whose herds are unaffected by brucellosis," Becton said. "Cattle raisers should remain alert for disease sources in their vicinity and take actions to protect their herd and neighbors' herds."

"Getting your herd tested and certified free of brucellosis are steps in the right direction," he said.

Senate ag committee sets farm bill hearing

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Senator Jesse Helms, Chairman of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, announced today hearing dates on the 1981 Farm Bill.

The hearings are tentatively scheduled to take place over 17 business days in March, Helms said, with the first starting at 9 a.m. on Monday, March 2.

The hearings are being held on the reauthorization of basic food and agriculture statutes which expire this year. Hearings will focus on current law and farm programs administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, as well as other issues, Helms said.

The Committee expects to hear from Members of Congress, general farm and commodity organizations, and interested members of the general public, the Chairman said. He said he expects to release shortly a schedule listing subject areas which will be considered on each hearing day.

Persons wishing to testify should contact Agriculture Committee Chief Clerk, Mac McCarthy, or Hearing Clerk, Denise Alexander, at 202/224-2035.

In order to accommodate as many persons as possible who wish to testify, each witness will be limited to an oral statement of no more than 10 minutes. Comprehensive written statements will be accepted and inserted into the hearing record. Also, each witness or organization will be allowed to testify only once, so each statement should encompass all concerns regarding the entire farm bill.

Twenty-five advance copies of any statement must be delivered to the Committee by noon on the day prior to the witness' appearance. Seventy-five additional copies should be submitted on the hearing day.



THIS FARM FAMILY FINDS SECOND USE FOR TOUGH-BUILT RED BEDDING CHOPPER

Like every other dairy farmer, Carl and Jim Hostetter, RD 2, Annville, must sometimes feed first cutting alfalfa to their 82 milking cows. When they must, the Hostetters use the tough built, red bedding chopper from US Farm Systems of Pennsylvania. This barn chopper cuts the hay stems into short lengths. And the cows appreciate the chopper's work. The high producing cows eat more hay. Give more milk. Leave less wasted hay in the manger.

"We used the bedding chopper to chop course hay to mix with our silage," Jim said. "And the cows increased production. With the short stems the cows ate more hay. And drank more water. Before we used the bedding chopper to cut the course hay, we had to remove and throw away at least four bales of hay each day."

Of course, the Hostetters use the red bedding chopper to chop bedding every day too. "We keep the cows noticeably cleaner," Jim said. "And we save labor. I can bed 82 cows in 20 minutes. Before we had the chopper, it took three men to shake out the straw by hand."

The Hostetters find the gasoline engine on the red bedding chopper uses only 1 1/2 gallons of fuel in seven days of bedding 82 cows each day. For the fun of using figures, Jim says that's about 383 stalls per gallon.

"We were looking for a bedding chopper for a long time," the young dairyman said. "But we just didn't find one that completely satisfied us until dad saw the red bedding chopper at the All American Dairy Show in Harrisburg last fall. That's all it took. We liked the many different cut lengths we could get on the 'red one.' And since we have it, we certainly wouldn't want to go back to the old way of bedding cows."

For more information on how you can use the tough built red bedding chopper on your farm, write or call

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