

# 13 herds found infected with bovine tuberculosis in 1981

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Thirteen livestock herds containing nearly 4,000 animals were found to be infected with bovine tuberculosis during the fiscal year which ended Sept. 30, U.S. Department of Agriculture officials said.

"This continues the generally decreasing trend of tuberculosis infection in U.S. cattle herds during the past ten years," said Ralph Hosker, a veterinarian with USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service. "In 1971 there were 67 herds found infected with the disease."

All animals in the 13 herds were slaughtered to eliminate the disease and the owners paid a total of \$1.4 million in federal indemnities, Hosker said.

"We're inclined to forget that bovine tuberculosis is also a

human disease," Hosker said. "Bovine tuberculosis can cause hunchback, which rarely occurs today. The disease was usually spread by humans drinking raw, unpasteurized milk or by handling infected raw meat. Today's meat inspection programs and milk pasteurization are designed to help protect people from the disease."

"Tuberculosis is an insidious disease with a delayed incubation that may have a long-term effect on exposed animals remaining in a herd," he said.

"The last 5 herds authorized for destruction during the 1981 fiscal year had 550 cattle and 5 swine," Hosker said. These herds were

located in Vermont, West Virginia, Illinois, Kentucky and Puerto Rico.

"Thanks to a broad range of detection and surveillance techniques, we are able to find and remove these sources of tuberculosis infection," Hosker said. "If left undetected, they could have spread the disease unknowingly to other herds."

Hosker said the Vermont herd was a 185-head dairy operation near Enosburg Falls. The infection was found through tuberculin testing required in the communities where the milk was sold.

Meat inspectors helped find the disease in three other herds when

they reported lesions resembling those of tuberculosis in the carcasses of slaughtered cows. USDA officials traced the animals to their owners and confirmed these infections through testing and laboratory diagnostic procedures; 166 head of cattle near Blot in Boone County, Ill.; a 66-head herd near Capon Bridge, W. Va.; and 85 cattle and 5 swine at Summer Shade in Metcalfe County, Ky.

Also, Hosker said, APHIS authorized the slaughter of a 45-head herd at Naguabo, Puerto Rico, because animals had been intermingled with another herd found to be infected this past summer.

The other eight herds destroyed during fiscal year 1981 were: three in Alabama, two in Puerto Rico and one each in Arkansas, Texas and Hawaii.

Hosker said veterinarians confirm infection in cattle herds by tuberculin testing, examining carcasses of those with positive test reactions, and culturing tissues with lesions resembling tuberculosis. The APHIS National Veterinary Services Laboratories at Ames, Iowa, does the diagnostic laboratory work. An infection is confirmed only after the causative

bacterium, *Mycobacterium bovis*, is isolated.

Federal and state officials check for tuberculosis through meat inspection reports, milk ordinance testing, screening tests and testing of livestock for sales, shows, interstate and export shipments. In addition, veterinarians on occasion test all herds adjacent to an infected herd or within a designated area.

Whenever herds are destroyed, the premises must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected and remain free of livestock for at least 30 days.

Hosker said infected or exposed herds are destroyed whenever possible, since the disease returns some 25 to 30 percent of the time when less stringent measures are undertaken.

The cooperative state-federal bovine tuberculosis program began in 1917 when about five percent of all cattle were infected. Now, the infection rate is less than one-tenth of one percent, he said.

According to Dr. Max Van-Buskirk, Jr., chief veterinarian for Pennsylvania's Bureau of Animal Industries, Pennsylvania has not had a tuberculosis outbreak since 1978.

## Corn growers

(Continued from Page C6)

In concluding his remarks, NCGA President Mullins called on Agriculture Secretary Block to arrange for an immediate meeting of the NCGA farmer officers with President Reagan.

"Such a meeting would allow the President to focus solely on, and hopefully appreciate better, the financial plight in which the U.S. government is placing U.S. corn farmers," said Mullins. "President Reagan — and particularly his economic advisers — must clearly understand the long

term ramifications to both the national and farm economics, should he move to embargo corn exports. Failing to gain full and complete cooperation of other exporting countries in a grain embargo will only accelerate the collapse of U.S. corn prices, now below \$2 per bushel in several farm states. Moreover, the shift of Soviet grain import demand to the other markets will allow the grain exporting countries to gain a permanently higher percentage of world grain trade to the disadvantage of U.S. corn growers."

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