

Bovine TB Surveillance in Alberta 2017

Wildlife Information Bulletin

In October 2016 bovine tuberculosis (bTB) was detected in a beef cow from southeastern Alberta. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) initiated an immediate investigation and also requested that the province consider looking for bTB in wildlife. Alberta Environment and Parks, Fish and Wildlife Branch, expanded our ongoing passive bTB surveillance of hunter-harvested deer, elk, and moose but did not find any evidence of the disease in Alberta in [2016](#).

During summer 2017, the province worked with CFIA to develop a program of active surveillance for bTB in wildlife that met international standards. The program is designed to build on ongoing disease monitoring efforts and focus on hunter-harvested elk at Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Suffield.

The goal is to test enough samples to demonstrate 95 per cent confidence in disease freedom at the 1 per cent level. With guidance from CFIA, we determined this requires testing 369 elk heads over three years (2017-2019). The target each year is ~120 elk from Wildlife Management Unit 732 (=CFB Suffield). Tissue samples collected by the province are provided to CFIA for testing.



Passive Surveillance

Public education

- largely delivered as in [2016](#)
- online general bTB information and the situation in southeast AB
- bTB information in all daily hunter briefings at CFB Suffield

Lymph node assessment

- ongoing examination of lymph nodes for visible evidence of bTB in all heads sampled for CWD.
- enlarged (2x normal) or abscessed nodes forwarded to Alberta Agriculture & Forestry (AF) and, if appropriate, further bTB evaluation undertaken. (Standardized protocol developed in conjunction with AF)

General diagnostic response to individual hunter concerns

- the Wildlife Disease Unit responds to a wide range of hunter concerns associated with harvested animals. Any such situation suggestive of possible bTB infection is addressed with the hunter and, if appropriate, samples provided for lab evaluation.
- All appropriate diagnostic cases examined by the Wildlife Disease Unit consider bTB

Active Surveillance

- sampling protocol established in conjunction with CFIA.

Results from 2017/18

Passive surveillance

Education

Daily briefings provided at all CFB Suffield hunts.

Summary of 2016 bTB surveillance provided on disease web pages.

800 hunters were licenced to hunt elk in WMU 732 in 2017/18. Additional First Nations hunters attended the hunt. All individuals who hunted at CFB Suffield were briefed about bTB.

Lymph nodes

In 2017/18, 3472 mule deer, 2517 white-tailed deer, 229 elk, and 204 moose from Alberta were tested for CWD. No visible lesions were detected in any lymph nodes.

Specific to CFB Suffield: 351 elk were harvested, of which 144 heads were tested for CWD. No lesions suggestive of bTB were reported by hunters or seen by CWD staff.

Diagnostics

No diagnostic cases had lesions that met criteria for being suggestive of bTB infection.

Active surveillance (Final Results)

Appropriate samples from 138 elk harvested in WMU 732 in 2017/18 were provided to CFIA for bTB testing.

August 1, 2018: All testing is complete and all elk were NEGATIVE for bTB

Summary

All testing is finished. No visible evidence of bTB during the 2017/18 hunting seasons in Alberta.

Additional Information

Southeastern Alberta bovine tuberculosis info:

CFIA: www.inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/diseases/reportable/tuberculosis/investigation-western-canada/eng/1477438380160/1477438380659

Government of Alberta, Bovine Tuberculosis in Wildlife

www.aep.alberta.ca/fish-wildlife/wildlife-diseases/documents/BovineTuberculosis-Mar-2004.pdf