

Food Safety Sentinel

Quarterly newsletter for Alberta Agriculture and Forestry's provincially licensed abattoir operators

Age Verification in Cattle and the Important Role it Has in Food Safety

Age verification (determining the age) in cattle is very important as it helps reduce the risk of the human disease variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease (vCJD). vCJD is a neuro-degenerative disease that is untreatable and always fatal ⁽¹⁾.

vCJD has been associated with the consumption of food products derived cattle infected with Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE, or "mad cow disease") ⁽²⁾.

Studies have shown that cattle over 30 months of age are at a much higher risk to carry BSE and that is why the Specified Risk Material (SRM) policy was developed. For more information on SRM requirements, please refer to the [Food Safety Sentinel Summer's 2015 issue](#).

When determining age in cattle, there are two methods used in provincially licensed meat facilities:

1. **Dentition/teeth development:** A trained individual, monitored by the on-duty meat inspector, visually examines the incisor (top four front) teeth to determine the age. If **more than** two permanent incisor teeth are visible, the carcass is deemed to be over 30 months (OTM) and must be identified as such. See the figures below showing examples of different ages in cattle determined by dentition.

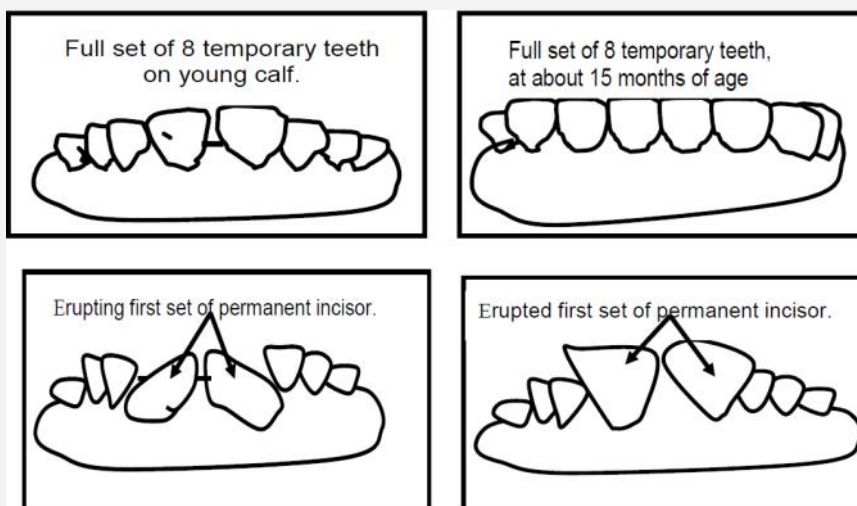


Figure 1: Illustration of Dentition for Cattle Under Thirty Months (UTM)
Illustrations courtesy of Food Safety and Inspection Service

Age Verification article continued on next page

IN THIS ISSUE

Age Verification in Cattle and the Important Role it has in Food Safety

Online Food Safety Course

The Impact of Employee Retention on Food Safety

Regulatory Update: Halal Labelling

Serving Safer Food in Alberta

Spring 2016

ISSUE NO. 8

Alberta Agriculture and Forestry
Food Safety Division

303, J.G. O'Donoghue Building
7000—113 Street
Edmonton, AB T6H 5T6
T. 780-415-4570

Toll free dial 310-0000 within Alberta

Email: foodsafety@gov.ab.ca
Website: foodsafety.alberta.ca

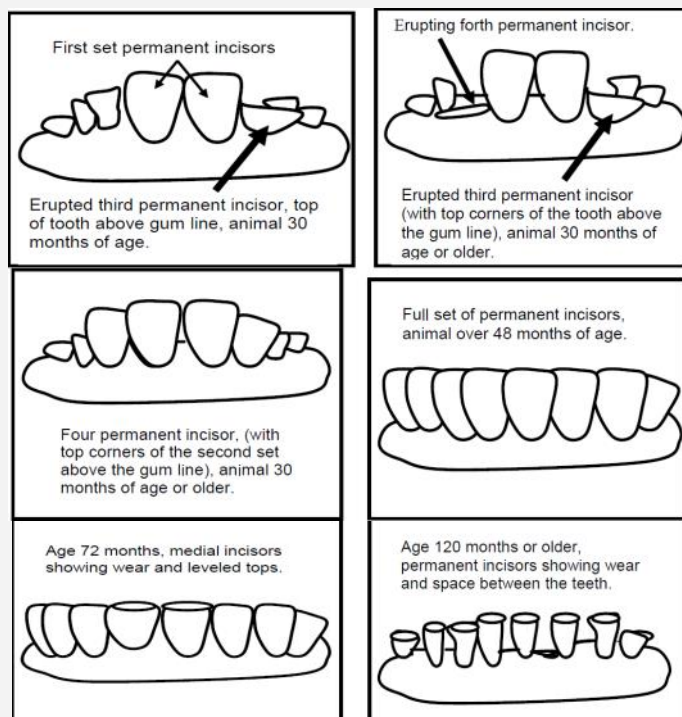


Figure 2: Illustration of Dentition for Cattle Aged 30 Month or Older (OTM).

Illustrations courtesy of Food Safety Inspection Service.

2. Reliable Birth Date Documentation: This is the preferred method, as well the most accurate. The original owner enters the birth date information for each calf born on the farm of origin into the national Canadian Livestock Tracking System (CLTS) which is administered by the Canadian Cattle Identification Agency (CCIA). This data is linked to a unique federally approved CCIA Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) ear tag that each animal is provided. This information is printed out on an official birth certificate or can be accessed by meat plants.

Age-verification support is available, free of charge, across the province through either the local Agriculture and Forestry office or the local CCIA Mobile Field Representative (MFR). Call 310-FARM or visit the Traceability Connects online interactive map at:

agriculture.alberta.ca/traceabilityconnects

References:

1. www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/animal/bse-esb/policy_srm-politique_mrs-eng.php

2. www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/animal/bse-esb/index-eng.php

Online Food Safety Course

Alberta Food Processors Association



Online Food Safety Training and Management Systems www.afpa.com

Did you know?

Retention of staff and the decrease of employee turnover can impact the financial and social wellbeing of an abattoir. Companies that focus on retaining workers can see the benefits of their investment through the reduction of hiring and training costs, increased worker productivity, safe food handling practices and improved workplace morale.

For more information about Workforce Retention programs and grants, please visit Alberta Agriculture and Forestry's [Workforce Development Program](http://www.alberta.ca/workforce-development-program) website.

Regulatory Update

Effective April 4, 2016, the national new halal labelling and advertising requirements will be enforced following a two-year transition period.

For more information visit the CFIA's website at: inspection.gc.ca and search "halal".

Useful Link

Serving Safer Food—Alberta is a food safety system that can be used for very small/ microprocessors who currently do not have resources or have the need to implement a full HACCP system.

For more information, please visit the Alberta Health Services (AHS) website at

albertahealthservices.ca/eph/Page6584.aspx