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## A Downgraded TB Status: What it means to you!

On September 11, 2008 USDA downgraded New Mexico's Tuberculosis (TB) status from Accredited Free (AF) to Modified Accredited Advanced (MAA). The decision to change New Mexico's status is an action required by the Federal Bovine Tuberculosis Eradication Program following confirmation of two positive cases of bovine tuberculosis in less than 48 months in an accredited free zone or state. The first of two positive cases was confirmed in April 2007 after routine testing conducted at slaughter and traced back to a NM dairy herd. The second case was confirmed positive in a cow at an eastern NM feedyard. Prior to the federal reclassification, NM had a split-state status where a small-localized area was designated as a MAA (located in south central Curry and north-central Roosevelt Counties) and the remainder of the state was designated as an AF zone.

Will the downgrade in New Mexico's TB status affect your operation? There is no simple answer to this question. After summarizing the best available and most current information from the New Mexico Livestock Board (NMLB) and USDA-APHIS, and consulting with local veterinarians, I have developed a short-list of items that I believe are important in keeping up with the entire TB issue in NM, especially as it relates to marketing and movement of cattle in the short-term.

**Rely on the Facts.** One of the most common mistakes we make in these types of situations is relying on second hand information for the facts. I encourage producers to stay focused on educating themselves with the factual information provided by our animal health authority in the State of New Mexico, namely being the Office of the State Veterinarian (OSV) and the NMLB, and consulting with your local veterinarian. The best source of information is on the New Mexico Bovine TB Response website at [http://www.nmlbonline.com/tb\\_response/](http://www.nmlbonline.com/tb_response/). This website has the most current information on the situation and is updated frequently. It is also a good idea to keep the main office phone number (505-841-6161) written down or plugged into your contact list. The USDA website ([http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal\\_health/animal\\_diseases/tuberculosis/](http://www.aphis.usda.gov/animal_health/animal_diseases/tuberculosis/)) focused on bovine tuberculosis is an excellent source of information regarding the Federal Bovine Tuberculosis Eradication and Surveillance Program.

**Plan Ahead.** To date, cattle moving within the state of NM **do not** have to be TB-tested prior to shipping. Depending on the class of cattle and state of destination, your cattle may have to be tested prior to being moved out of NM. If testing is required prior to shipping, give yourself plenty of time. The first test that will be performed by a veterinarian is the caudal-fold tuberculin (CFT) test. The veterinarian will inject tuberculin in the caudal area just underneath the base of the tail, and then will return in three days to "read" the test, which involves examining the injection site for any swelling or discolorations. If a reaction to the injection is present, the animal is considered a "responder" or "suspect" and will go through a second round of testing. It can be expected that 2 to 7 percent of any given herd will be found to be "responders." If your herd has any suspect cattle, the whole herd will be quarantined until the animal is determined to be negative on the second TB test. The second test, performed only on the responders, is the comparative cervical tuberculin test (CCT). This test must be performed between 10 and 60 days from the CFT test (first test), and must be administered by a state or federal veterinarian (list of approved veterinarians is listed on the above USDA-APHIS website). The vet will shave two areas on the neck and measure the skin thickness before injections are given to establish a starting base point. Two different tuberculins will then be injected in the shaved areas. The vet will return three days later to read the tests. Depending on the skin reaction, cattle can be classified as "negative," "suspect" or "reactor." All cattle classified as suspect or reactor after the CCT test will be slaughtered, and samples will be taken for further analysis to determine if bovine TB is present. If animals in the herd are classified as suspect or reactor to the second test, the whole herd will be quarantined until the lab results are finalized. Be aware that this could take several weeks. If these tests come back negative, the quarantine will be lifted.

**Call Ahead to the State of Destination.** Remember, not all states have the same entry requirements for cattle originating from NM. The New Mexico Bovine TB Response website has a link with specific requirements from some states (AZ, CO, KS, NE, ND, OK, SD, and TX), as well as an additional resource and contact information for all 50 states. While the website provides individual state requirements, it is strongly advised to call animal health officials in the state of destination for the most current information prior to shipping. Since the downgrade in status, some individual state requirements for certain classes of cattle have been changing regularly. If you plan on sending your calves to an out-of-state sale facility or participating in a livestock exposition call the sale or show management for their specific requirements.

**Know Important Dates.** Believe me, some of the specific requirements by states can become confusing and overwhelming and may require multiple readings before it sinks in. If testing is required by the state of destination, pay specific attention to how many days prior to import (shipping) a negative TB test is required.

**Understand Identification Requirements.** In reviewing specific requirements by states of destination, some are requiring **official identification** prior to entry on certain classes or all cattle. What is official identification? In NM, official identification is a registered NM brand and will suffice for cattle movement within the state. For cattle moving into some states (depending on requirements), official identification requires one of four federally approved sources of identification: 1) a silver USDA metal ear tag, 2) an orange USDA metal brucellosis vaccinate ear tag, 3) an “840” radio frequency identification (RFID) ear tag, or 4) an “840” non-RFID ear tag (typical visual tag). The “840” prefix refers to the first three digits in a 15-digit animal identification number and is reserved only for animals born in the U.S. Note: in order to purchase “840” ear tags (RFID or non-RFID) the manufacturer and distributor of the tags will require a USDA-assigned premise number, whereas, a USDA-assigned premise number is not required for the silver USDA metal ear tag or the orange USDA metal brucellosis vaccinate ear tag.

**Participate in the Public Comment Period.** As part of the interim rule published by USDA-APHIS in the Federal Register there is an opportunity for you as a New Mexico beef cattle producer to share your comments on New Mexico’s downgraded TB status by either going online (<http://www.regulations.gov/fdmspublic/component/main?main=DocketDetail&d=APHIS-2008-0068>; once on the site, click on add comments on the line under Document ID APHIS-2008-0068-0001) or mailing your comments via postal mail (Docket No. APHIS-2008-0068, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A-03.8, 4700 River Road Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238; state that your comment refers to Docket No. APHIS-2008-0068). All comments are due by November 10, 2008. Producer comments support the efforts of the Office of the State Veterinarian and the New Mexico Livestock Board who have already submitted an application for split-state status in an effort to minimize the economic ramifications to New Mexico producers as a result of the downgraded status. If the split-state status is granted by USDA-APHIS, the NMLB would enlarge the previous MAA zone in Roosevelt and Curry counties (encompassing both counties almost entirely since this is the location of the confirmed positive cases of TB in NM) and the remainder of the state would be classified as AF.

How long will NM be under a MAA status? If split-state status is not granted through this process it is likely that a TB accredited-free status may be considered after 24 months since the last infected herd was depopulated (which occurred in mid July 2008) if the following criteria are met: 1) NM adheres to federal testing requirements in a majority of NM dairy herds and approximately 10% of NM beef herds, and 2) no additional discoveries of TB in New Mexico cattle occur within the same 24 month period.

The TB issue is complex. Feel free to give me a call at (505) 927-7935 or send me an e-mail at [mencinia@nmsu.edu](mailto:mencinia@nmsu.edu) if you have any questions on this topic. As always, call on your local county agent and me if we may be of assistance to you with specific management questions and challenges facing your operation.