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Bovine TB – How Can *You* Help?

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Bovine TB is an issue that we continue to struggle with in northeast Michigan. For farmers in the area, especially in the “TB hot zone”, keeping livestock TB free can be a big concern. The effects of finding infected animals in your herd can be devastating; just ask one of the cattle producers whose herd has been depopulated. For those of you that don’t have livestock, bovine TB probably doesn’t cause you

to lose any sleep at night and for hunters it may be nothing more than something to check for when you harvest a deer. With rifle season just around the corner, we thought we should remind deer hunters that they have an important role in dealing with this disease.

Over the past two years, hundreds of cattle producers across northeast Michigan have decided to participate in the Michigan Department of Agriculture’s Wildlife Risk Mitigation Project. This is a way for farmers to take a proactive approach to reduce transmission of the disease from wildlife to cattle. The process begins with a technician who visits a farm and discusses what practices can increase the risk of transmission of the bacterium from wildlife to cattle. Several management practices are evaluated during a farm’s assessment including feeding and feed storage, water sources and access to good deer cover. The result is a customized action plan that describes how producers can meet program standards designed to make their farm more “biosecure”. By following their plans, farmers are making a commitment to manage their farm in a way that helps reduce the spread of bovine TB to cattle and also among deer.

The Wildlife Risk Mitigation Project is a great step toward managing bovine TB. Producers are making a huge effort to do what they can on their farms, but there is another group of people who are critical to controlling this disease. That group is hunters. What can hunters do that is so important? Do what they enjoy – harvest deer! In addition to providing a great way to enjoy the outdoors, hunting is a valuable tool to manage our deer herd. Reducing the density of deer can help minimize the spread of the TB bacterium. This is especially important in DMU 452 where the prevalence of TB is greater than surrounding areas. Another thing hunters can do is stop baiting. Aerosol transmission (coughing and sneezing) is a very effective way for the bacterium to spread among deer and, unfortunately, baiting facilitates this. So until deer learn to use hand sanitizer and cover their mouths when they cough please do what *you* can to help stop this disease from spreading. For those of you heading out into the woods please be safe; we wish you good times and good luck.

If you would like more information on the Wildlife Risk Mitigation Project or Bovine TB, please check out the following links:



Link to Wildlife Risk Mitigation Project PowerPoint slideshow

http://www.michigan.gov/documents/emergingdiseases/WRMP_Jul09_285982_7.pdf

Link to MDA's bovine TB web page <http://www.michigan.gov/emergingdiseases/0,1607,7-186-25804---,00.html>

Link to MDA's Wildlife Risk Mitigation Project YouTube video

<http://www.michigan.gov/mda/0,1607,7-125-48096-231998--,00.html>