



Dairy Cattle Situation Update

March 16, 2024

The Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) is aware of an animal health situation affecting dairy cattle. TAHC is working closely with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to further monitor and evaluate reported cases.

Clinical signs include decreased herd level milk production; acute sudden drop in production with some severely impacted cows experiencing thicker, concentrated, colostrum like milk; decrease in feed consumption with a simultaneous drop in rumen motility; abnormal tacky or loose feces, and some fever. Impacted herds have reported older cows in mid-lactation may be more likely to be severely impacted than younger cows and fresh cows or heifers. Dry cows and heifers do not appear to be affected. In addition, some herds have reported pneumonia and clinical mastitis cases as secondary sequelae.

Current Efforts:

The TAHC, USDA, Texas A&M Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (TVMDL), and dairy veterinarians, along with other partners, are working closely to coordinate an efficient plan to monitor and evaluate affected dairy cattle, develop a case definition, and conduct additional diagnostics. Collective efforts to establish resources, guidance, and support for producers and veterinarians are underway. More information to help dairies respond will be distributed as the situation evolves.

Dairy Level Guidance:

In addition to biosecurity best management practices, it is recommended that dairies implement enhanced biosecurity measures to protect their facilities. Biosecurity practices guidance is available at <https://securemilksupply.org/>. In the immediate, and as a best practice, it is recommended to limit persons coming onto dairies to employees and essential personnel only.

As outlined within the Pasteurized Milk Ordinance, normal and best practice dictates that milk appearing to be abnormal should be diverted from the salable milk supply. Additionally, the federal meat inspection act requires an antemortem and postmortem examination of every animal presented for slaughter to ensure safe and wholesome meat products enter the food chain.

Report Affected Dairy Cattle:

If you believe dairy cattle within your herd are showing these signs, contact your herd veterinarian immediately. Veterinarians at the dairy facility level can best assess these animals, decide on the appropriate supportive care for them, and determine the appropriate samples to be taken and diagnostics to be performed. A similar communication is going out to the dairy veterinary community, and animal health officials are working directly with practicing veterinarians to share information between practitioners and animal health officials, as it becomes available.

Additional Information & Guidance:

Additional communications will be shared with all stakeholders as more is known about this issue. In addition to working through your herd's veterinarian of record, questions can be directed to the Texas Animal Health Commission directly at 800-550-8242. We encourage checking the TAHC website, <https://www.tahc.texas.gov/>, for situational updates and additional guidance as more information becomes available.