

# WILDLIFE INFORMATION

## Bovine Tuberculosis in Southeast Alberta



**our challenge** In October 2016 the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), determined that a case of bovine tuberculosis (bTB) in a beef cow was linked to a premises northwest of Medicine Hat, Alberta. The agency immediately began a rigorous disease investigation consistent with the National Bovine Tuberculosis Eradication Program.

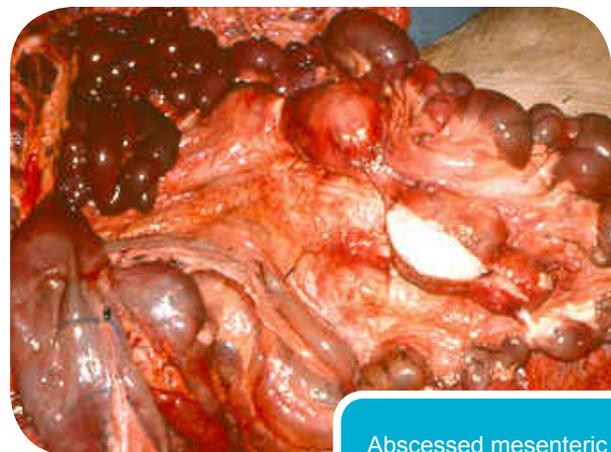
Bovine TB is a federal reportable disease and CFIA leads the investigation in order to find the extent of infection in livestock, implement humane destruction of any infected herds and manage the risk to livestock markets. Later, the risk to wildlife will be assessed in conjunction with Alberta Environment and Parks.

**The risk of bovine TB infection in wildlife in Canada is low.**

Documented cases occur only in free-ranging elk and white-tailed deer in and around Riding Mountain National Park in Manitoba and in free-ranging bison in and around Wood Buffalo National Park in Alberta /Northwest Territories. Both situations involve spillover of the disease into wildlife from infected cattle herds many decades ago.

In the vicinity of infected livestock, CFIA and provincial wildlife agencies work cooperatively to develop a plan for bTB surveillance of wildlife.

In British Columbia, infected cattle herds were found in 2007, 2008 and 2011. Wildlife surveillance was implemented in 2014, 2015 and 2016. No cases in wildlife have been detected to date.



Abscessed mesenteric lymph node

Bovine TB can sustain infections in wild populations under specific conditions. Ongoing surveillance in livestock, early detection, and aggressive response is the primary means of limiting exposure and potential for spillover into wildlife populations.

Once established, bTB in wildlife is difficult, but not impossible, to eradicate. The program in Manitoba is making good progress in reducing the disease in free-ranging cervids.

## Specific to the recent case



- The risk of bTB occurring in local wildlife is very low
- Concerns have been raised about the possibility of bTB in the large population of elk associated with Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Suffield.
- Original elk on CFB Suffield were translocated from Elk Island National Park (EINP) in the late 1990s.
- All animals relocated from EINP are tested for bTB, and have been for many many years.
- bTB has not been detected in EINP since the early 1980s (a wood bison that came to EINP from Wood Buffalo National Park in the mid 1960s).

## Bovine TB and Hunters

The risk that bovine TB occurs in free-ranging elk or deer in Alberta is very low.

Bovine TB does not readily transfer to humans.

### PRECAUTIONS

Wear waterproof gloves whenever you handle the internal tissues of your harvested animal.

Wash your hands, knives and clothes in warm, soapy water.

Cook meat well, until the juices run clear.

Smoking, freezing or drying meat will NOT destroy the bacteria. Cook meat well.

Learn about bovine TB and if you see any suspicious abscess in the lymph nodes, lungs or chest cavity of your harvested animal, contact a Fish and Wildlife Office.

## Summary

A thorough disease investigation is underway regarding the recent case of bTB in cattle linked to southeastern Alberta. The risk of infection in wildlife is LOW; however, hunters should be aware and take appropriate precautions when handling wildlife harvested in this area. Basic care to avoid direct handling of tissues and in subsequent cleanup is recommended.

## Additional Information

Canadian Food Inspection Agency  
Bovine Tuberculosis  
[www.inspection.gc.ca/tb](http://www.inspection.gc.ca/tb)

Government of Alberta  
Bovine Tuberculosis in Wildlife  
[www.aep.alberta.ca/fish-wildlife/wildlife-diseases/documents/BovineTuberculosis-Mar-2004.pdf](http://www.aep.alberta.ca/fish-wildlife/wildlife-diseases/documents/BovineTuberculosis-Mar-2004.pdf)

Government of Manitoba  
Bovine Tuberculosis in Elk  
[www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/wildlife/disease/bovine.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/conservation/wildlife/disease/bovine.html)

Wildlife Diseases in Alberta  
[aep.alberta.ca/fish-wildlife/wildlife-diseases/](http://aep.alberta.ca/fish-wildlife/wildlife-diseases/)