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United States
Department of
Agriculture

VETERINARY SERVICES MEMORANDUM NO. 552.39

Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

SUBJECT: Criteria for Establishing Bovine Commuter Herd Agreements
within the Tuberculosis Eradication Program

Veterinary Services
Washington, DC
20250

TO: VS Management Team
Directors, VS

I. PURPOSE

This Veterinary Services (VS) Memorandum provides general criteria to guide Area Veterinarians in Charge (AVIC) when approving commuter herds for movement, with reduced testing requirements for bovine tuberculosis (TB).

II. GENERAL

VS Memorandum No. 551.0, Section II, A, 2, a, delegates authority for exceptions to interstate TB testing requirements to the AVIC. The general criteria described in this VS Memorandum will result in increased standardization, consistency, and uniformity with regard to the movement requirements of commuter herds from State to State. Below is the definition of commuter herd that has been included in the TB Uniform Methods and Rules (UMR) dated January 2005:

A herd that has been recognized and approved to have its animals moved interstate or interzone, without change of ownership, during the course of normal production operations. The animals must move directly from property owned, leased, or rented by certain individual producers or entities directly to property owned, leased, or rented by these same individual producers or entities. A commuter herd agreement specifying testing or certifications excepted or required, and agreed upon by State and Federal officials and the individual or entity for each State affected must be in place prior to any movements and must be reviewed and renewed annually to remain in effect.

Sections 77.8, 77.10, 77.12, 77.14, and 77.18 of Title 9, *Code of Federal Regulations* (9 CFR), indicate various requirements for animals moving interstate or interzone from States or zones of different status. VS recognizes that repeated testing, identification, and certification of livestock moving interstate without change of ownership under normal ranching operations are burdensome. The commuter herd concept described in this document will relieve these interstate movement requirements, subject to the acceptance and approval of the responsible State and Federal officials. This concept is similar to a provision in the brucellosis regulations that allows the interstate movement of certain cattle in the course of normal ranching operations if no change in ownership occurs (9 CFR 78.9(3)(ii)).



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III. COMMUTER HERD AGREEMENTS

Commuter herd agreements must be requested and established in accordance with the minimum criteria listed below. AVICs and State Veterinarians should develop and implement these agreements in concert and are encouraged to seek counsel, guidance, and recommendations from Regional Epidemiologists or National TB Staff as needed.

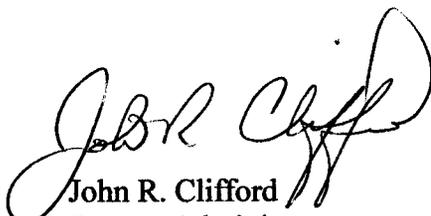
A. Basic Requirements for Commuter Herd Agreements

1. Individual commuter herd agreements must be developed; blanket or umbrella agreements for multiple operations are unacceptable. (Commuter herd agreements are referred to as "Pasture to Pasture permits" in California, Oregon, Nevada, and Idaho.)
2. Commuter herd agreements may only be established between the following States, zones, or regions:
 - a. Accredited Free and Modified Accredited Advanced.
 - b. Modified Accredited Advanced and Modified Accredited.
 - c. Modified Accredited and Accreditation Preparatory.
3. Should the States, zones, or regions involved in a commuter herd agreement change status such that they no longer meet the above criteria, all commuter herd agreements must be terminated immediately and all animals returned to the primary premises within 30 days of termination. If the animals are not returned to the primary premises within 30 days, all animals must comply with the CFR, UMR, or other applicable requirements for movement relating to the herd's present State, zone, or region before being returned to the primary premises.
4. Only valid established cattle operations in existence for 6 or more months, as confirmed by field staff, can engage in commuter herd agreements.
5. Individual commuter herd agreements must be reviewed and renewed annually based on field staff review, contacts, and recommendations.
6. Any such agreements must have a provision for timely termination if the level of risk or circumstances changes.
7. No change of ownership of animals or properties can occur.
8. Commuter herd agreements involving any States, zones, or regions that have TB in wildlife will only be approved with the concurrence of the Regional Epidemiologist and the National TB Staff. These agreements must include herd plans documenting efforts to mitigate the risk of infection from wildlife reservoirs at all locations the herd will be maintained.

B. Movement, Identification, and Testing Requirements for Commuter Herds

1. The animals must move from property owned or leased by specific individual producers or partnerships directly to property owned or leased by these same individual producers or partnerships.

2. Cattle in commuter herds must not be commingled with cattle from any other herds, including while on pasture or while being transported between premises.
3. Animals 6 months of age and above must be accompanied by a certificate documenting the premises identification number of the original herd and the premises identification number of the destination location.
4. All non-natural herd additions must be individually identified with an Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)/VS approved eartag and comply with the CFR, UMR, or other applicable requirements for movement relating to the herd of origin's State, zone, or region before being commingled with the commuter herd.
5. As a minimum, a whole herd test must be performed on test eligible animals 6 months of age and above prior to or within 12 months from the date the commuter herd agreement receives final approval, and every 3 years thereafter as necessary.
6. Animals in commuter herds that die must be accounted for at each annual review.
7. At the time of the whole herd test and thereafter, each animal in the herd over 6 months of age must be individually identified with an APHIS/VS approved eartag.
8. Herd sales of test eligible animals originating in commuter herds must be moved directly to slaughter or through approved markets for slaughter only, unless the animals comply with the CFR, UMR, or other requirements for movement applicable to the commuter herd's State, zone, or region before being moved.
 - a. For interstate commuter herds, the status of the herd for movement purposes must be defined in the commuter herd agreement.
 - b. For intrastate-interzone commuter herds, the status of the herd for movement purposes must be that of the lowest status zone involved in the commuter herd agreement.
9. States may require a permit for the inspection and movement of commuter herds.



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