



"Serving Michigan's Cattlemen Since 1960"

August 12, 2019

Dear Honorable Members of the Agriculture Committees:

The Michigan Cattlemen's Association is greatly concerned with the continuing problem of bovine tuberculosis in the wild deer herd in northeast Michigan and its continued spread to cattle herds in that region. For over twenty years this problem has persisted while the state has pursued a TB program focused on disease monitoring and control.

With the recent discovery of a TB infected cattle herd in Presque Isle county, the United States Department of Agriculture is proposing downgrading the TB status of the entire state. This downgrade would be devastating to the cattle industry in Michigan. It would result in statewide cattle testing requirements, fewer marketing options, market disruption and a ban on the movement of breeding cattle across state lines. Producer costs would increase and selling opportunities would decrease in a business that is characterized by very slim margins; creating the likelihood that many in the state would have to consider whether to remain in the cattle business or not.

We would urge the state legislature to:

1. Work with the Department of Natural Resources and Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development to adopt a more aggressive program designed to eradicate bovine TB from the state's deer and cattle herds. This should include a wild deer herd population level reduction in northeast Michigan to a level that is conducive to elimination of bovine TB from the herd.
2. Fund the state's bovine TB program at a level that enables MDARD and MDNR to continue biosecurity and surveillance testing obligations as required by the joint Memorandum of Understanding with the United States Department of Agriculture.
3. Ensure state agencies act with urgency to address and eradicate the source of the disease reservoir in the wild deer.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment regarding this very important issue to the cattle industry in Michigan.

Sincerely,

Brian Plank
President, Michigan Cattlemen's Association