

Wyoming Brucellosis Coordination Team

April 18, 2017

Pinedale, WY

I. Welcome and Introductions.

Chairman Galey called the meeting to order. Members in attendance: Bill Williams (DVM, Former G&F Commissioner), Scott Talbott (WGFD Director), Senator Fred Emerich DVM (WY State Senate), Albert Sommers (WY State Representative, Rancher), David Rael (WG&F Commission), Jim Logan (WY State Veterinarian), Will Laegreid (WSVL Director), Mary Wood (WGFD Veterinarian), Scott Werbelow (WGFD), Karl Musgrave (WY State Public Health Veterinarian), Terry Pollard (WY Outfitters and Guides Assoc), John Keck (National Park Service), Marty Griffith (US Bureau of Land Management), Thach Winslow (WY Asst State Veterinarian), Sara Ahola (USDA APHIS), Bruce Hoar (COANR), Glenn Owings (UW Extension), Bill Bass (US Forest Service), Jessica Crowder (Governor Matt Mead's Office, via conference call).

Guests: Eric Liska (MT Department of Livestock), Noah Hull (UWYO), Brandon Scurlock (WGFD), Hank Edwards (WGFD), Kate Leavitt (ID Department of Agriculture)

II. Test Requirement for cattle movement to MT from Big Horn County

Frank Galey (FG): Jessica Crowder may not be with us all day, so we need to discuss the letter to MT regarding movement of cattle from Big Horn County. The other letter (to USAHA) has been pulled due to concerns raised by Dr. Logan.

Dr. Jim Logan (JL): The USDA is looking at their slaughter surveillance program and may change the number of tests that they perform. The WY Chapter 2 Rules have changed. If the rule is being complied with, then cattle leaving from a farm or ranch for slaughter should be brucellosis tested.

III. WY State Vet Report

Dr. Jim Logan (JL) provided the WY State Veterinarian report to the group (see attached file for complete details). There is one herd in Sublette County still under quarantine. They now have 2 consecutive negative herd tests, with the next testing due to occur in May (post-calving). If all negative, the herd will be released from quarantine dependent on their having an affected herd "herd plan". If the test is not completely negative, then WLSB would work with the neighbors who might have contact to arrange for turnout for summer grazing. There has been good cooperation from WSVL, USDA-APHIS, and USFS.

JL: In 2016, 65,508 head of cattle from the DSA and Brucellosis Area of Concern (BAC) were tested for brucellosis. Also, 137 herd plans were renewed, 16 new herd plans were signed, and 24 risk assessments completed. A total of approximately 14,000 tests were from the BAC. South Dakota, North Dakota, and Montana require negative test for movement of cattle from Big Horn USDA-APHIS will be conducting a review of WY Brucellosis Testing in the near future.

Sara Ahola (SA): APHIS conducts reviews of brucellosis testing by States regularly, and now will conduct reviews every 3 years, rotating between WY, ID, and MT. this will be similar to the 2012 review, and will provide suggestions to the States on their programs.

Albert Sommers (AS): As a comment, I would mention that one time APHIS came to visit in the winter – it would have been informative had they been there this past winter, as they would have appreciated the importance of feedgrounds.

Terry Pollard (TP): With budget cuts, I understand there was a bill to cut enforcement officers from WLSB. Is that true?

JL: WLSB has 4 officers, the legislature passed a bill to eliminate 3 of those. We are left with one person to coordinate with other law enforcement branches to update them on relevant laws and regulations.

AS: I serve on the appropriations committee. We moved brand inspection back from general funding to a fee based system. WLSB will need to discuss with producers what fees and services they will accept.

JL: Some brucellosis dollars were cut in the recent legislative session. But we believe that what was retained will be sufficient to continue with current levels of testing and brucellosis vaccination.

JL: I want the group to have a heads up on traces of bovine tuberculosis in cattle. SD has an affected herd, identified in late February. The SD herd had purchased cattle from a WY herd. Some cattle sold from SD went to WY (86 heifers), which were backgrounded. Some moved to 3 other WY herds, as well as CO, NE, and MT. Have found all but 14 of these cattle. All those found and tested have been negative, all were sent to slaughter, and no lesions were found. The herd that sold to SD has been tested, and a few responders were detected. The comparative cervical test showed that 6 head were still suspect. Those 6 were slaughtered and no lesions found. It appears that there is no problem in the potential source herd from WY.

BW: Is the SD herd cleared?

JL: The index herd has been depopulated. Forty-one head with lesions. Two additional herds have been identified as infected so far, with 1 or 2 affected animals in each of those herds.

BW: Based on your surveys of cattle in Big Horn County, do you lobby other states to allow cattle in without additional testing? Will the USDA review help with interstate shipment?

JL: We hope the review will be positive, but we can't control what other states will do. We converse with other State Veterinarians and discuss the situation.

FG: We hope that our letter for Governor Mead will help give Dr. Logan a tool to use with other states.

AS: What are the requirements from SD, ND, and MT?

JL: Sexually intact cattle greater than 12 months of age must be tested. So far this is only for Big Horn County. ND also requires Washakie County cattle to be tested.

JL: We recently received a letter from Lincoln County Commissioners about the boundary of the DSA. In 2010 it was expanded beyond the Forest limits. There have never been cattle test positive from this area. They are asking WLSB to reconsider the boundary of the DSA.

IV. MT / ID Case Updates

Eric Liska (EL): Montana continues to have a domestic bison herd under quarantine. This is a herd of 4,500 test eligible animals and is still finding positive animals on annual tests. In the fall of 2016 a new bison herd was detected when 2 bulls were tested positive for brucellosis. They were slaughtered and the resulting culture was very similar to a culture from an elk fetus from Beaverhead County. Two contact cattle herds (3,000 head and 1,000 head) were tested and all were negative.

EL: Fish, Wildlife, and Parks will focus surveillance of elk efforts on the western part of the DSA this upcoming winter. Also, Custer National Forest has seen an explosion in their elk population, so FWP will also look there.

AS: Thank you for making the trip. Communication between the states is very important. Your Senate passed a bill this spring asking WY to eliminate elk feedgrounds. I would like to extend an invitation for them to come and see the feedgrounds themselves.

FG: Any plan to test elk directly north of Big Horn County?

EL: That is tribal land, and FWP is trying to find the correct contact person. Testing on private property is challenging.

JL: How many Montana Board of Livestock members are cattle producers from the DSA?

EL: One.

BW: Please consider the body of evidence to possibly eliminate the testing requirement on cattle from Big Horn County.

EL: The proposed letter will be presented to the Board and considered.

Kate Leavitt (KL): Idaho update. Currently there are no positive herds in ID. The Simplot slaughter plant is to open May 1. It will process cull cows and bulls and has a capacity of 1,700 head/day. It is in the Nampa/Kuna area of ID. All animals slaughtered there will be tested by the ID State Lab.

V. Surveillance in Big Horn/Sheridan Counties

JL: From 2013 to present, there have been approximately 14,000 head of cattle tested, with no suspects identified. We would like to see more testing, but it is voluntary, so producers can't be forced to test. The informational meetings held last summer were well attended, and seemed to lead to increased testing and more herd plans. WLSB is waiting for results of the elk movement study before deciding on any change in the DSA boundaries. Producers have responded pretty well, but there are still some that are not aware of the situation. The Livestock Markets will do what is required, but aren't too interested in doing extra/voluntary testing. Until the markets are willing, it will be hard to get some herds tested. The markets are willing to test if the producer requests testing.

AS: Are the numbers being tested increasing?

JL: There seemed to be good participation in the first two years (after positive elk identified), then the numbers fell off a bit, but after the meetings last summer there has been a slight increase in interest.

FG: We will try to get more extension meetings planned for the region in the near future. I have met with the WY Congressional Delegation about money in the Farm Bill – there is wording for Brucellosis/Tuberculosis research in the bill, but no money has been allocated. The Delegation will try to get it in the new Farm Bill, and ask that money be moved from other funds into Brucellosis/Tuberculosis.

VI. Research update

Noah Hull (NH): The goal of our project is to replace culture with PCR, which would be faster, safer, and more accurate. PCR has shown no cross-reaction with other bacterial species, indicating good specificity. We examined 63 seropositive cull bison from YNP. Culture of these animals revealed 42.9% positive, while PCR found 84.1% positive, indicating that PCR is about 2 times more sensitive. We also examined 103 elk from SD (cullled for CWD) and all were PCR negative, indicating that it is a very specific assay. This year, there were 159 bison from YNP

that we collected samples from. We will continue to collect seropositive and seronegative cattle, and seropositive elk from WGFD. These samples will be used to re-evaluate the cut-off values of serologic tests.

NH: We are putting forward a RFP for studying *Brucella suis* with collaborators in Texas. Serology cannot differentiate *B. suis* from *B. abortus* in cattle.

AS: What kind of samples do you get from YNP bison?

NH: We got samples from both positive and negative animals this year, whereas last year we only got samples from positive animals.

AS: Blood? Or other samples?

NH: We work on the slaughter floor, and collect 4 tissues as well as blood.

JL: Can you explain your funding?

NH: There are many sources, including USDA, Western SARE, NASA, State Brucellosis funds, Western INBRE and others.

BW: We can do PCR on an ear notch for BVDV. Would this ever be possible for brucellosis?

NH: There are low numbers of *Brucella* in an infected animal, and they are localized in lymph nodes, so it is unlikely to be present in an ear notch.

AS: How much lymph node do you need?

NH: We usually collect the whole node.

FG: As the test development for *B. suis* goes forward, does this group agree to write a letter of support for Noah and Dr. Schumaker?

Group: Yes.

VII. BSL 3update

Will Laegreid (WL): As you know, there were a lot of problems with the initial BSL3 lab construction. Over the past 3 – 4 years, it has basically been torn down and re-started. But, good progress is now being made. The design and installation of an incinerator has been challenging, but once installed, it will be a great improvement. We hope that final initial lab construction will occur by early fall.

FG: Once the lab is built it will take a while to get through CDC approval. Do you have an estimate on the time line for the incinerator?

WL: No, not really, it's hard to know how long it might take.

BW: Can you use the old one until the new one is ready?

WL: No, but we have installed a temporary one that will do the minimum necessary until the new one is ready.

VII. Wyoming Game and Fish Hunter Surveillance Updates

Scott Talbott (ST): WGFD has been getting general funds for 5 programs since 2010, with a total funding of \$10.8 million. A recently passed law stripped all general fee dollars from WGF Commission to be replaced with license fee increases. However, we come up \$900,000 short (\$450,000 per year in the biennium). Wolf management program was cut way back, but with possible delisting changes, we will have to take care of wolves with less money.

JL: Do the cuts affect brucellosis funding?

ST: Not sure, but I thought that Doug Miyamoto had some money available.

AS: No reductions as far as I know.

ST: As far as Chronic Wasting Disease – over the past 40 years, the disease has moved through WY. It is now documented in Cody, just east of YNP, just east of Pinedale, and a couple of deer have been detected in Star Valley. The Commission is very concerned – what will presence of CWD do to wildlife management. It's a problem in many parts of the country – TX, MI, AR to name a few.

AS: What's different between deer and elk?

ST: We see very high prevalence in deer and very low in elk in some areas. CO has higher prevalence in elk than we do in WY.

Mary Wood (MW): Don't know why the prevalence is lower in elk than deer.

AS: Has it been seen in moose yet?

MW: We've had 1 case in WY, a couple in CO. Not a lot of overlap where we have high prevalence in deer/elk with our moose populations.

David Rael (DR): Some people/groups are saying that if we leave the wolf alone it will take care of CWD for us.

Hank Edwards (HE): Hunter killed elk surveillance (See power point for more details). We focused our efforts on the Bighorns, and also south and east of the DSA. About 11,000 sample kits were sent out, with 7,500 going to the Bighorns. Statewide, we had 1,398 samples received, 1,035 (74%) were suitable for testing. From the Bighorns, 779 samples were received, 592 suitable for testing. We had one seropositive male elk from Hunt Area 49 in October, which led to increased surveillance effort in that area. For the year, we had 3 seropositive females from HA 40 – two elk study animals in February and 1 hunter harvested in October. So, from 2012 to 2016, there have been a total of 11 seropositive elk from the Bighorns in 4 different HA's. Seroprevalence in the DSA varied from 12.4% (Cody herd) to 32.1% (Gooseberry – HA 61, 62, 63). For 2017 we will continue surveillance in the usual areas, and add southeastern WY.

JL: When was the last seropositive elk found in Lincoln County?

HE: Not sure, but it's been many years, maybe 10 years.

Scott Werbelow (SW): Were the 2 captured elk culture negative?

HE: Yes, culture negative. They were "low positive" on serology.

VII. North Bighorn Elk movement update

Mary Wood (MW): The objective of this study is to monitor and assess the movement of elk among herd units and hunt areas in the Bighorn Mountains. Captures were carried out in mid-February to March in 2016 and 2017, with 59 being captured in 2017. There are now 79 collars "on-air", transmitting data, from the North and South Bighorns, and the Greybull river area. Thus far there have been mortalities from hunter harvest (9), capture (3), predation (1) and crippling (1). GPS data has shown that 9% of elk move between herd units and 23% move between hunt areas. Most movement seems to be north-south, rather than east-west. Elk density during the peak abortion period is not very dense for the most part, but some areas on the eastern side of the Bighorns in Sheridan County show higher density.

JL: It is important to clarify that there were no actual abortions, you are just noting where they are during the abortion period.

MW: That is correct, we've not seen brucellosis in those areas, but feel that it is something that we need be paying attention to. A caveat is that there is not a whole lot of data yet, but it is important to use the data that we have.

VIII. WGFD Feedground surveillance

Brandon Scurlock (BS): (See attached power point for further details) In the winter of 2017, 538 elk were captured on 18 feedgrounds. Three hundred twenty seven were yearling and adult cows, and were bled for serologic testing. Of these, 26.2% were seropositive for brucellosis. Prevalence at Muddy Creek feedground was 25.6% and at Fall Creek, 9.9% (this is the lowest prevalence feedground, and also the one with the shortest feeding season). WGFD also deployed 78 GPS collars and 37 VITs. A total of 36 elk on the NER were collared.

BS: WGFD shipped 20 seropositive elk females from Muddy Creek to USDA APHIS in Fort Collins CO. One animal escaped (has since been found), and the remaining seropositive elk are being killed. Due to record snowfall accumulation at many feedgrounds, it was difficult to employ low-density feeding this winter. Also, feeding continued later than usual at most feedgrounds, also due to record snowfall.

FG: With the seropositive elk at Fort Collins being euthanized, are we able to collect samples?

NH: Yes, we are working to get appropriate samples.

AS: Where did the elk move this winter?

BS: There was a lot of snow and cow harvest in November was not good. This led to some conflict situations. WGFD ended up euthanizing 36 animals. It was hard to move elk around this winter. There were also some emergency feeding situations required to avoid conflict with cattle.

TP: No doubt this has been a bad winter, but it isn't unheard of. This year points out the need for elk feedgrounds.

JL: Even in Park County, where people would range cattle through the winter, they had to move cattle elsewhere for the feeding period.

IX. NAS Review Update

FG: The report has not been released yet. It has been reviewed anonymously and we wait for its release – possibly by mid-May. We will inform the group once it is released.

JL: With regard to the letter being drafted asking MT to change the requirements for testing of cattle from the BAC. I recommend that the letter be sent from our Governor to the Governor of MT, with a c.c. to MT Board of Livestock.

Group: Perhaps there should be a joint risk assessment/herd plan, whereby officials from both states be involved. About ¼ of the State of WY is within the DSA, some herds with very little risk compared to others.

X. Legislative Update

Fred Emerich (FE): There were reduction in general funds for WGFD, this applies to other agencies as well, such as DOT. We will see increases in vehicle fees as a result. Cuts have been across the board, we need to get used to the fact that we will all have to pay more. There was some talk about 'enhanced funding sources' – taxes.

AS: The Senate and House didn't get along this year. There is lots of animosity over school funding. It hard to predict the impacts of cuts – we tend to find out after the fact. I am hopeful that we have hit bottom. I can't see how to solve education funding without increased taxes.

FG: We voted last year to go to one meeting per year. A spring meeting is likely to be most useful. Governor Mead approves of this idea. We could call ad hoc meetings if necessary. Thoughts from the group?

ST: If you want updated surveillance data, we need to meet in the spring, maybe May.

JL: May would be good. If needed, we could get information out to the group.

AS: Best to avoid the second week of May.

XI: Public comment

Jim Magagna: USDA is holding public meeting on animal identification. This may be of interest for this committee.

JL: There will be a series of 5 listening sessions about animal disease traceability, specifically for the cattle industry. They are seeking comments on whether to add feeder cattle.

Thach Winslow: They are seeking comments on the current plan, where to go in the future, and what changes need to be made.

Motion to adjourn.

APPENDIX I.

Guest attendees

NAME	AFFILIATION
Ken Hamilton	WY Farm Bureau
Jim Magagna	WY Stock Growers Association
Melanie Purcell	Sublette County Commission
Brant Schumaker	UWYO
Noah Hull	UWYO
Erica Beck	ID Dept of Agriculture
Kate Leavitt	ID Dept of Agriculture
Hank Edwards	WGFD
Lloyd Dorsey	Sierra Club
Carrie Dobey	USDA/APHIS
Becky Frey	USDA/APHIS VS-MT
Brandon Scurlock	WGFD
Eric Liska	MT Dept of Livestock
Brian Nesvik	WGFD
Lindy Linn	Congressman Cheney