

To Stakeholders,

November 29, 2013

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has confirmed an incursion of Bluetongue virus (BTV) serotype 11, in two of the sentinel herds in the Okanagan Valley. This finding is a result of monthly testing (June to October every year) of the six sentinel herds that were established in 1988. The previous detection of BTV in the Okanagan Valley was almost 10 years ago (2004).

Bluetongue (BT) is a viral disease affecting sheep, goats, cattle, deer, bighorn sheep and antelopes. BT may cause serious illness and death in sheep, deer and ruminant wildlife. Affected cattle self-cure without clinical signs. BTV has 26 serotypes and the only significant route of transmission between animals is via certain species of *Culicoides* (midges), which are limited in their distribution in Canada. Currently there is no evidence of overwintering of the virus in Canada.

In 2007, the five serotypes considered endemic in the U.S. (serotypes 2, 10, 11, 13 and 17) were removed from the reportable diseases list and placed on the list of immediately notifiable diseases. Import testing requirements were removed, except for animals from the state of Florida where exotic serotypes of BTV are known to exist. No disease control actions are taken for these 5 serotypes. The remaining 21 of the 26 known BTV serotypes are still reportable and considered exotic to Canada.

Since 1969, Canada has experienced five incursions (1975, 1987, 1988, 1998 and 2004) of two U.S. serotypes of BTV in the Okanagan Valley of British Columbia. These are believed to have been a result of southerly winds carrying infected midges from the U.S. BTV transmission in Canada outside of the Okanagan Valley has never been found. Canada's claim to freedom from BTV outside of the Okanagan is supported through our national Bovine Serological Survey (BSS), which is conducted every 3-5 years. The last BSS was conducted in 2007-2008. Planning is well underway to convert the periodic BSS into an on-going surveillance system, with sampling anticipated to start in December. Substantial information is also generated on a regular basis through testing conducted for export, import, artificial insemination units and disease control requirements.

The CFIA will work with trading partners to address any export related issues and to minimize impact on trade.

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