

# Trichomoniasis Testing Requirements Are Changing For Arkansas

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**B**eginning May 15, 2009, any breeding bull entering Arkansas from another state must either be a virgin bull under 24 months of age or must be accompanied by a negative test for trichomoniasis conducted within 30 days prior to entry. These requirements have been adopted as an emergency regulation by the Arkansas Livestock and Poultry Commission, the regulatory agency for livestock in the state. Trichomoniasis or "Trich" is a venereal disease of cattle caused by the protozoa organism, *Trichomonas foetus*. The disease is not a human health issue, but it leads to infertility, abortions, an extended breeding season and a diminished calf crop, which is very costly to cattle producers. Trichomoniasis is currently a reportable disease in Arkansas. These new regulations are similar to requirements that have been developed by at least 15 other states in the western and southern U.S. to address this disease.

Trichomoniasis causes very few outward signs of illness in infected bulls. Therefore, it can often be present in a bull for a considerable time before it is suspected and diagnosed. Infected cows, however, will experience infertility, causing the cow to return to heat multiple times and subsequently leading to poor pregnancy rates and an extended breeding season. This causes devastating losses due to reduced calf crops and prolonged calving seasons. Infected cows may display a thick yellowish vaginal discharge while infected, but in many cases, no outward signs may be apparent in infected cows. The majority of infected cows will clear the infection if given

120-150 days of sexual rest. A vaccine can also be administered to cows to aid in the control and prevention of this disease. Vaccination requires two injections, typically administered two to four weeks apart.

Currently, there is no effective treatment or vaccine for breeding bulls, and as bulls age, their reproductive organs become more hospitable for a Trich infection. This disease has few adverse effects in the bull, but the bull acts as the main source of transmission for the rest of the herd. Once infected, bulls (especially bulls over 4 years of age) often stay infected for life.

The new regulations for Arkansas indicate that all breeding bulls entering Arkansas must be officially identified with one of the following: a permanent metal tag, an RFID tag, an official breed registry brand or tattoo or an official state of origin trichomoniasis tag. Breeding bulls arriving into Arkansas from other states must be accompanied by a veterinary inspection certificate, and bulls less than 24 months of age must be certified as virgins and must be accompanied by a certificate of virgin status signed by the breeder/owner of the bull or an authorized veterinarian. Breeding bulls over 24 months of age or any non-virgin bull must test negative for trichomoniasis within 30 days of shipment via a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test or by three separate culture tests conducted not less than one week apart. All samples collected for testing must be collected by an accredited veterinarian and performed by an approved laboratory. Some bulls are exempted from testing - exhibition or rodeo bulls that are temporarily in the state only for the purpose of the event and will leave the state after the event or any bull that is consigned to go directly to slaughter.  $\Delta$

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