



# Trichomoniasis Testing Frequently Asked Questions and Answers

Trichomoniasis is a highly contagious venereal disease of cattle. Although not a new problem the incidence is rising and it has become a serious problem in some nearby states. In an effort to protect Oklahoma cattlemen and the Oklahoma cattle industry, the Oklahoma Legislature recently passed a law requiring testing of breeding bulls that change ownership or management within Oklahoma. This law will take effect January 1, 2011. The following are answers to some of the common concerns voiced by Oklahoma beef producers. In addition to this information, producers are encouraged to seek out and attend producer educational sessions on this issue being held around the state, or contact your OSU County Extension Office to request scheduling of an educational program in your area.

**Q) Will this disease have a serious impact on the beef market like some recent problems?**

A) Probably not. The meat is not affected and there are no human health risks. Infected cattle do not get sick. The economical impact is in the serious loss of reproductive performance. Up to 50% losses of calf crop can occur.

**Q) Will I have to castrate my male calves before I market them?**

A) No. The new law applies only to bulls over 1 year of age.

**Q) Will I have to have my cull bulls tested before I take them to the sale barn?**

A) Not necessarily. Most cull bulls go to slaughter and these bulls are exempt from testing. If you wish to offer your bull as being ready to go back to another breeding operation, however, you may want to consider having him tested before consigning him to sell.

**Q) Why does this new law not include testing for cows?**

A) Cows usually clear the infection on their own if not recontaminated by infected bulls. In addition, the test is not very reliable in cows and requires multiple tests in order to be trustworthy. Your best option is to purchase new female herd additions from reputable breeders who can provide evidence that they are not having a Trich problem.

**Q) If my bull tests positive, what can I do to clear the infection?**

A) Nothing. Most bulls, especially those past 3 years of age, are carriers for life if they acquire the infection and will spread it to 80 to 90% of the cows they breed.

**Q) What should I do if I have a bull that tests positive?**

A) With Trich, even one positive test indicates that the organism is present in your herd. This is not necessarily an insurmountable problem and the sooner it is detected the easier it is to resolve. There are management tools available to help resolve the problem, and your local veterinarian is best positioned to help you outline a program for your operation.

**Q) What is the difference between the two tests that are available?**

A) Both tests start by obtaining a sample from the bull's prepuce and penis and protecting it in a special culture medium for shipping. The older culture test is less expensive but is not conclusive and is required to be repeated 3 times for regulatory purposes. The newer PCR test checks for genetic material from the organism and is more reliable. One test is sufficient for regulatory purposes. Although it is more expensive, it is usually cheaper than 3 consecutive cultures and is much easier on the bull, the veterinarian and the owner.

**Q) Can I collect and submit my own samples?**

A) No. For regulatory purposes the sample must be collected and submitted by a licensed veterinarian who has received specific training and certification to do the collection correctly. The Oklahoma Department of Agriculture and OSU College of Veterinary Medicine are working now to provide this training and certification to food animal practitioners across the state.

**Q) What do I need to do if I purchase a bull at my local auction that is not tested?**

A) Under the new law you can have your newly purchased bull tested at the sale barn by the sale veterinarian and then take him home under a special quarantine. You must agree to isolate him from breeding animals until the test results are known (usually 7 to 10 days) and to sell him for "slaughter only" if he tests positive. You should seek clarification from the market operator or sale veterinarian before bidding on untested bulls.

**Q) If I buy and feed cutter bulls what does this new law mean to me?**

A) The law contains an exemption for cutter bulls that are purchased for feeding only and not allowed exposure to females. Visit with your market operator or sale veterinarian for clarification on this exemption.

**Q) Is testing required if I buy, sell, or lease a bull through a private treaty transaction?**

A) Yes. A negative test is required by law any time a breeding bull changes ownership or management within the state of Oklahoma, or enters from another state.

**Q) Where should I go for more information?**

A) Your local veterinarian should always be your first source of information on any health related issues. Other sources of information concerning the new testing regulations are the Oklahoma Department of Agriculture, Animal Industry Services, and your county OSU Extension Office.