

 **NEWS RELEASE**

United States Department of Agriculture • Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service • Legislative and Public Affairs
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USDA CHANGES MONTANA'S CLASS FREE BRUCELLOSIS STATUS

WASHINGTON, Sept. 15, 2008--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) is amending its brucellosis regulations concerning interstate movement of cattle by changing Montana's classification from Class Free to Class A. This action is necessary to prevent the spread of brucellosis.

In order for a state to attain Class Free status, all cattle herds within that state must remain free of *Brucella abortus* for a period of 12 consecutive months preceding classification as Class Free. Montana attained Class Free state status in June 1985. In May 2007, a single brucellosis affected cattle herd was confirmed in the state. Montana took immediate measures to maintain its Class Free status according to federal regulations. However, on June 9, 2008, another brucellosis affected herd was confirmed. Both infected herds were within the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA), which houses the last known reservoir of brucellosis in the United States. With the discovery of the second affected herd, APHIS determined that Montana no longer meets the standards for Class Free status.

Class A status requires producers to test sexually intact cattle over 18 months of age for brucellosis within 30 days prior to interstate movement. Cattle exempt from this testing requirement must originate from a certified brucellosis-free herd, or be moving either directly to slaughter or from the farm of origin to an approved livestock market for testing.

Brucellosis is a contagious disease caused by the *Brucella* bacteria, and affects animals and, rarely, humans. The classifications for brucellosis are as follows: Class Free, Class A, Class B and Class C. When brucellosis is found in more than one herd of cattle in a brucellosis-free state within a two-year period, the state is downgraded to Class A status. Restrictions on moving cattle interstate become less stringent as a state approaches or achieves Class Free status. The Class C designation is for states or areas with the highest rate of brucellosis. States or areas that do not meet the minimum standards for Class C are required to be placed under a federal quarantine.

Notice of this interim rule was published in the Sept. 3 *Federal Register* and became effective upon publication.

Consideration will be given to comments received on or before Nov. 3. Send two copies of postal or commercial delivery comments to Docket No. APHIS-2008-0086, Regulatory Analysis and Development, PPD, APHIS, Station 3A-03.8, 4700 River Road, Unit 118, Riverdale, MD 20737-1238. Comments can be submitted on the Federal eRulemaking portal at

<http://www.regulations.gov/fdmspublic/component/main?main=DocketDetail&d=APHIS-2008-0086>. Click on “Add Comments” to view public comments and related materials available electronically.

Comments received are posted on the Regulations.gov Web site and also can be viewed at USDA, Room 1141, South Building, 14th St. and Independence Ave., S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. To facilitate entry into the comment reading room, please call (202) 690-2817.

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