

PERFORMANCE AUDIT

Brucellosis Management in the State of Montana

Department of Livestock

Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks

JANUARY 2017

16P-06

REPORT SUMMARY

The Department of Livestock needs to improve oversight of livestock brucellosis testing to ensure all potentially infected livestock are tested. The Department of Fish, Wildlife & Parks' role and responsibilities relative to preventing brucellosis transmission between wildlife and livestock should be better defined.

Context

Brucellosis is a regulated infectious disease that affects certain livestock and wildlife populations within the states that contain the "Greater Yellowstone Area"- Montana, Wyoming, and Idaho. The Montana Departments of Livestock (DOL) and of Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) have management authority over livestock and wildlife. These state agencies spent over \$7.5 million of federal and state funds in efforts to prevent the transmission of brucellosis between wildlife and livestock since fiscal year 2011. DOL requires increased brucellosis testing to be performed on livestock in parts of southwestern Montana through its Designated Surveillance Area program, while FWP conducts activities for monitoring and responding to the disease in elk. Both agencies are signatories to an Interagency Bison Management Plan that details responsibilities for a large range of management activities over Yellowstone bison. These responsibilities are shared among the state of Montana and federal agencies.

Results

We conducted a performance audit of multiple programs across the two state agencies that protect livestock populations from brucellosis infection. Our performance

audit found that both departments should make improvements to these programs. DOL is accurately issuing payments to veterinarians for brucellosis testing, but needs to enhance its oversight of various elements of its Designated Surveillance Area program for brucellosis. The department should improve its process for ensuring that all required brucellosis testing is carried out, and consistently respond to noncompliance with brucellosis testing requirements. DOL also needs to better document bison management, and increase coordination with FWP on concerns related to the presence of bison. While FWP is managing the presence of brucellosis in some Montana elk populations through an adapted form of game damage mitigation, its responsibilities could be better defined. This process lacks clear, defined eligibility criteria for landowners requesting assistance.

Our recommendations to DOL include:

- ◆ Improving oversight of brucellosis testing requirements.
- ◆ Expanding documentation of certain brucellosis vaccination payments.
- ◆ Using the Interagency Bison Management Plan adaptive

management guidelines when lethally removing bison and clearly documenting the need for lethal removals.

Our recommendations to FWP include:

- ◆ Clarifying its role and responsibilities in responding to brucellosis through legislation.
- ◆ Defining its brucellosis response program through administrative rules and program policies.

Recommendation Concurrence	
Concur	4
Partially Concur	1
Do Not Concur	0
Source: Agency audit response included in final report.	

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