

Mycoplasma bovis – Advice on using imported or local semen

BACKGROUND

With spring mating of cows imminent, it is important that farmers are fully informed about the level of risk of transmission of *Mycoplasma bovis* in semen.

While there is a low risk of transmission via semen, there are no studies demonstrating that this actually happens in practice. Embryos are a possible source of *Mycoplasma bovis* infection but are also considered low risk.

The highest risks of *Mycoplasma bovis* transfer are:

- direct animal to animal contact;
- feeding of milk from infected cows to calves;
- moving infected animals to other herds/husbandry groups; and
- equipment (e.g. calving equipment, calfeterias) that has been in contact with the bodily fluids of infected animals.

We do not know how or when *Mycoplasma bovis* entered New Zealand although significant efforts are being made to find out. This knowledge will enable any necessary measures to reduce the risk of new outbreaks. *Mycoplasma bovis* is present in most other countries in the world, including countries that imported semen is sourced from.

SEMEN AND SEMEN IMPORTS

- The Import Health Standard (IHS) that regulates the importation of semen into New Zealand recognises that semen is a potential pathway for *Mycoplasma bovis*.
- The IHS has controls in place around the husbandry and health status of donor bulls to reduce the risk of introducing disease, such as *Mycoplasma bovis*.
- Tests for the disease in semen exist but are not particularly reliable.
- Antibiotics routinely used in the processing of frozen semen may not be completely effective in killing mycoplasmas.
- *Mycoplasma bovis* can survive freezing.

WHAT CAN FARMERS DO?

- Farmers should make an informed decision on the use of local or imported semen, based on available information.
- When deciding whether to use imported or local semen this season, it is important to note that while semen is considered low risk, it is a possible entry pathway.
- If farmers are concerned, we recommend that they ask their semen supplier:
 - What kind of assurance can you give that insemination of my herd will not lead to an outbreak of *Mycoplasma bovis* on my farm?
 - Have the donor bulls been tested for *Mycoplasma bovis*?
 - Can your semen company provide an assurance that their semen is free of *Mycoplasma bovis*?

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT:

<http://www.mpi.govt.nz/protection-and-response/responding/alerts/mycoplasma-bovis/>

<https://www.dairynz.co.nz/animal/cow-health/mycoplasma-bovis/>

<https://fedfarm.org.nz>

<http://www.beeflambnz.com/news-views/interim-guidance-protecting-your-farm-mycoplasma-bovis>

<http://www.nzva.org.nz/>

<https://www.dcanz.com/>



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