

## **Yellow Fever Moves North**

**Dr. Jessica Gordon**

November, 2015

Anaplasmosis, a.k.a. yellow bag or yellow fever, is a disease caused by a blood parasite called *Anaplasma marginale*. The parasite is transmitted between through contact of infected red blood cells with the blood of a susceptible animal. This can be through bites from ticks and biting flies or through needles and surgical equipment.

Cattle that are infected with *A. marginale* show signs of fever, decreased appetite, rapid breathing and respiratory distress, reluctance to walk and pale or white mucus membranes. The severity of disease depends on the age of the animal. Cattle less than 1 year often show no or mild signs, animals between 1 and 2 years show more severe signs of disease, but generally survive. Cattle over 2 years of age often die suddenly or are found dead. Death losses in older animals may be as high as 30-50%. Animals that recover from the disease still carry the parasite in their blood and can be a source of infection for other cattle. Economic losses in infected herds can be huge.

Anaplasmosis is found commonly in the southern and western United States and is occasionally found in Canada. Recently, it is occurring more frequently in the northeastern U.S., as close as New York State. Though it has been reported in Ontario in the past, there is currently no evidence of cattle Anaplasmosis in the province. Anaplasmosis was diagnosed in a horse in Eastern Ontario this past month. However it is important to note that the organism that causes the disease is different in horses and cattle.

Increased evidence of Anaplasmosis in the north is due to two factors, increased spread of the insects that help transmit the disease (ticks and biting flies) and discontinuation of mandatory testing before moving cattle. So what can you do to prevent the introduction and spread of Anaplasmosis in your herd?

- **Use one needle per animal.** The most common cause of transmission in the north appears to be using the same needle for multiple animals. When giving medications or vaccines, be sure to change your needle after each animal.
- **Ensure multi-use instruments are cleaned and disinfected between each animal.** This includes surgical and dehorning instruments, taggers, and ear notchers.
- **Testing for Anaplasmosis as is suitable for your herd.** New additions should be tested prior to placing them with the herd, especially if they are from high-risk areas. Animals from your herd that are commingled with high risk animals at shows or breeding areas should be tested prior to reintroduction to the herd. It is important to note that it takes about 3-8 weeks for an animal to test positive after infection so more than one test may be required. Discuss what testing protocol is appropriate for your situation with your herd veterinarian.

Though there is no evidence that Anaplasmosis in cattle is currently in Ontario, these measures can help ensure that your herd remains disease free. In fact, many of these practices can decrease spreading or introducing multiple diseases in your herd. Visit the Canadian Food Inspections Agency website for the Canadian Beef Biosecurity Standards (<http://www.inspection.gc.ca/animals/terrestrial-animals/biosecurity/standards-andprinciples/beef-cattle-on-farm/eng/1347287842131/1347292248382>) and discuss your herd's biosecurity practices with your herd veterinarian.