

*The WeCAHN Smallholders Network held a quarterly videoconference meeting on December 11<sup>th</sup> to discuss animal health events occurring from July to September 2025 with veterinary practitioners, diagnosticians, veterinary college faculty, researchers, and industry representatives.*

## 1) Overview

Data sources in this report include:

1. Clinical Impressions Surveys completed by network practitioners.
2. Data shared by western veterinary diagnostic laboratories: Manitoba Veterinary Diagnostic Services Laboratory (VDS), Prairie Diagnostic Services (PDS), and University of Calgary Faculty of Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Services Unit (UCVM DSU).
3. Scan: smallholder surveillance reported by other sources or networks.

## 2) Interesting Cases

- A study of smallholder poultry keepers' perceptions of avian influenza in BC and Yukon described ongoing challenges in understanding and applying biosecurity during repeated outbreaks since 2021. Communication should be more practical, value-based, and focused on co-benefits, such as predator control and the prevention of other diseases.
- CAHSS and WeCAHN will continue offering training for veterinarians, with a new series in spring 2026 focused on multi-species smallholder operations. Network members identified priority topics, including euthanasia methods, mortality disposal, food safety, zoonotic risks, biosecurity, quarantine, nutrition, and access to veterinary services.
- WeCAHN maintains a listing of smallholder veterinarians ([wecahn.ca](http://wecahn.ca)).
- A group of 15 nine-day-old pigs had sudden digestive illness, which was diagnosed with enteritis (intestinal inflammation) consistent with *Clostridium perfringens*. However, the bacteria could not be grown, perhaps due to antibiotic treatment before sampling.
- A practitioner reported frequent inquiries about *Mycoplasma gallisepticum* (MG) vaccination. Rather than vaccination, they recommended a combined approach using management, antibiotics, and culling.
- No published scientific evidence was found to support the social media claim that fenbendazole affects feather growth.
- About 100 deer and some bighorn sheep in Grand Forks, BC, died in September and October with bleeding from the nose and rectum. Anthrax was ruled out, and testing confirmed epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) with typical lesions. The same strain was reported in Washington, and winds may have carried infected midges into BC. Veterinarians in BC were alerted to watch for foot-and-mouth-like lesions in livestock and to remain vigilant for bluetongue (midges and environmental conditions overlap).
- National avian influenza surveillance reported no detections in Canadian cattle after 7,178 negative milk samples ([CFIA](https://www.cfia.gc.ca/en/About_Cfia/Programs/Animal_Health/Investigations_and_orders)). 88 poultry premises were infected this fall ([CFIA Investigations and orders](https://www.cfia.gc.ca/en/About_Cfia/Programs/Animal_Health/Investigations_and_orders)).





### 3) Syndromic Surveillance

- **Small poultry flocks:** A backyard chicken was diagnosed with avian tuberculosis. A young turkey confirmed with influenza A, while no avian influenza was detected in other submissions.
- **Small flocks of small ruminants:** Caseous lymphadenitis diagnoses remained stable, with single or small numbers of cultures in both goats and sheep.
- **Small herds of swine:** No swine submissions were received for diagnostic testing, and no laboratory-confirmed cases were reported.



### 4) Scan and other updates

- Smallholder submissions in British Columbia ([Program](#)) continued to reflect routine case volumes.
- In Alberta ([Program](#)), 14 investigations were completed, with poultry diagnoses including infectious laryngotracheitis, Marek's disease, coccidiosis, colibacillosis, and MG.
- The US CDC's multistate *Salmonella* outbreak investigation ([update](#)) linked most of 559 human cases to contact with backyard poultry.
- Malignant catarrhal fever was confirmed in an Alberta lamb.
- A Canadian study demonstrated that intramammary HPAI H5N1 infection induces severe mastitis in goats ([Alkie et al., 2025](#)).
- Wild pig surveillance [reported](#) established populations in three provinces (AB, SK and MB).
- Documented avian influenza exposure in Alberta pigs, coinciding with regional avian outbreaks and suggesting transmission between wild birds and wild pigs ([Ley Garcia et al., 2025](#)).



### 5) Producer takeaways

1. Biosecurity steps help protect your flocks from avian influenza and provide other benefits like fewer predator deaths.
2. Avian influenza continues to be found in poultry and wildlife, and research showed it can infect small ruminants and wild boar. Stay alert during wild waterfowl migration seasons and report any unusual illness to your veterinarian.
3. Report any unusual mouth or hoof lesions (like blisters) to your veterinarian immediately.

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