UNITED STATES ANIMAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION

2025 Resolution
129th Annual Meeting
Oct. 30 - Nov. 5 , 2025
Denver, CO

RESOLUTION NUMBER: 16 APPROVED AS AMENDED

SOURCE: COMMITTEE ON SHEEP, GOATS, AND CAMELIDS

SUBJECT MATTER: State or Regional Brucellosis and Tuberculosis Classification for Sheep and Goats

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RESOLUTION:

The United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) urges the United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Veterinary Services to officially declare United States domestic sheep and goats free of *Brucella melitensis*, *B. abortus* and tuberculosis, based on more than two decades without detection of cases, supported by consistent surveillance data.

Further, USAHA requests that states rescind testing requirements for brucellosis and tuberculosis in sheep and goats, where such requirements persist, to reduce unnecessary regulatory burden and facilitate interstate commerce.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has established disease classification systems for program diseases to help determine the risk of those diseases within states or regions. This resolution addresses brucellosis, as defined by the Uniform Methods and Rules (UMR) of the USDA, as an infectious disease of animals and humans caused by bacteria of the genus *Brucella* (*B. abortus*, *B. melitensis*, and *B. suis*). It does not pertain to *B. ovis*, the non-zoonotic causative agent of contagious ram epididymitis. The resolution also addresses the causative agent of bovine tuberculosis, *Mycobacterium bovis*, which is defined by the UMR as a zoonotic disease agent capable of infecting multiple mammalian species. Brucellosis classifications currently apply to cattle, bison, and swine; tuberculosis classifications apply to cattle, bison, and captive cervids.

Historically, cases of brucellosis and tuberculosis in sheep and goats in the United States (US) have been extremely rare. The last confirmed detections of *Brucella melitensis* occurred in a south Texas herd of goats and one sheep in 1999. Tuberculosis was last detected in Pygmy goats housed in zoos in 1991 and 1992. The USDA currently lists the US as “free” of *B. melitensis* for diseases reportable to the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, formerly OIE).

Despite the absence of evidence for brucellosis or tuberculosis in dairy sheep or goats, the Pasteurized Milk Ordinance (PMO) was modified in 1997 to require annual whole-herd testing for these diseases. A 1998 United States Animal Health Association (USAHA) resolution, along with objections from the American Association of Small Ruminant

Practitioners, led to a compromise resulting in the 2001 addition of the “random statistical herd sampling” option. However, animal health rules from the 2011 PMO exempt cattle and bison from testing if they originate from areas with certified free status. Since tuberculosis and brucellosis classifications do not include sheep and goats, PMO testing requirements for these species remain in effect.

In 2025, the National Conference for Interstate Milk Shipments passed a resolution to revise PMO Section 8, Animal Health, to remove the prescriptive tuberculosis and brucellosis testing requirements for sheep and goats, and to allow broader, risk-based state surveillance programs for these species.

Both the 2013 and 2014 USAHA resolutions on this subject requested that the USDA evaluate the need for such testing and establish appropriate classification systems. In response, USDA, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service acknowledged the rarity of disease detection but cited insufficient sample size to make a definitive national status determination.

Now, with more than 10 years of additional surveillance data—consistent with WOAH recommendations for establishing disease freedom—there is confirmation that no cases of brucellosis or tuberculosis have been detected in US domestic sheep and goats, despite routine nationwide testing. This provides strong, real-world evidence that these populations are free of both diseases. Continued testing requirements place unnecessary economic and logistical burdens on producers and restrict interstate commerce, without a demonstrable public or animal health benefit.