

Diseases of Cattle

- ▶ HOME
- ▶ ANAPLASMOSIS
- ▶ ANTHRAX
- ▶ BLACKLEG
- ▶ BLOAT
- ▶ BRUCELLOSIS
- ▶ BSE
- ▶ BVD
- ▶ CALF SCOURS
- ▶ CANCER EYE
- ▶ COCCIDIOSIS
- ▶ FOOT AND MOUTH
- ▶ FOOT ROT
- ▶ GRASS TETANY
- ▶ IBR
- ▶ EXTERNAL PARASITES
- ▶ INTERNAL PARASITES
- ▶ JOHNE'S DISEASE
- ▶ LEPTO
- ▶ LISTERIOSIS
- ▶ LUMPY JAW
- ▶ PINKEYE
- ▶ RINGWORM
- ▶ TRICHOMONIASIS
- ▶ VIBRIOSIS
- ▶ WARTS
- ▶ WOODEN TONGUE
- ▶ LINKS

VIBRIOSIS

Vibriosis (*Campylobacter fetus*) in cattle is an infectious bacterial disease of the genital tract causing infertility and occasional abortions. It is a venereal disease spread by infected bulls when they mate susceptible cows and heifers. It is considered to be the most important cause of infertility in cattle. Good vaccines are available, but it still causes losses simply because they are not used in many herds. Infection introduced into a non-exposed or non-vaccinated herd will spread rapidly during breeding.


Repeat breeding activity is generally seen in animals that were assumed to be pregnant. Irregular estrus cycles are common. Absorption or expulsion of a small fetus probably explains the long estrus cycle seen with this disease. Varying degrees of vaginal inflammation and uterine infection are present but may be unrecognized. Abortion rates in infected herds generally run from 5% to 30%. Some females may carry the fetus longer and may abort a sizeable fetus 5 to 6 months into the gestation period. Retained placentas are common. Diagnosis is confirmed by culture of the causative organism from cervical mucus or from an aborted fetus.

Vibriosis is somewhat self-limiting as most of the cattle recover within a year. Disease carriers are common, however, and new infection can spread to non-exposed animals. Vibriosis is best controlled by vaccination, which renders animals highly resistant to infection. Vaccination involves two injections, 4-6 weeks apart in the first year, and a single dose of vaccine each year thereafter. Vaccination should be completed 4 weeks before breeding. Vibriosis vaccine is often combined with Leptospirosis in one vaccine. The use of artificial insemination is also valuable in limiting disease spread. Most A.I. organizations test the semen to assure that it is free of vibriosis and trichomoniasis.

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