

MALIGNANT CATARRHAL FEVER

WHAT IS MALIGNANT CATARRHAL FEVER (MCF)?

An infectious disease affecting bison, caused by a sheep herpes virus (OvHV-2).

HOW IS MCF SPREAD?

AMONG SHEEP

- Almost all adult sheep carry the OvHV-2 virus
- Transmitted in nasal secretions, by direct contact, or thru the air
- Lambs, 5-9 months old, present the greatest risk of transmission because they are actively shedding the virus

FROM SHEEP TO BISON

- Transmitted by direct contact with sheep, virus particles in the air from nasal secretions, and contact with contaminated equipment
- MCF may lay dormant in some bison and become an active disease later; it may be brought on by stress
- Under the right climatic conditions and virus load (high lamb numbers), MCF can be transmitted over several kilometers
- Bison are dead end hosts, they cannot transmit MCF to any other animal

WHAT DOES MCF LOOK LIKE?

THE DISEASE IS CHARACTERIZED BY:

- Sudden death
- Fever
- Nasal discharge
- Clouding and/or ulceration of the eyes
- Respiratory problems (coughing, shortness of breath)
- Erosions in the mouth and upper respiratory tract
- Diarrhea (in some cases)

CLINICAL SIGNS LAST 1-7 DAYS AND THE OUTCOME IS FATAL.

Bison die within 2-5 days of clinical signs of MCF. Sheep carry the OvHV-2 virus and are healthy, showing no signs of MCF.



BE AWARE!





THERE IS NO VACCINE OR TREATMENT FOR MALIGNANT CATARRHAL FEVER

HOW IS MCF DIAGNOSED?

A preliminary MCF diagnosis can be made based on history, clinical signs and post mortem examination. Veterinarians confirm MCF using a blood test (PCR), which detects the OvHV-2 virus.

BE AWARE!

- Lambs present the greatest risk of transmitting the virus to bison
- Do not graze sheep **with** bison
- The MCF virus is fragile in the environment, surviving only a few days, depending on humidity and temperature. So sheep and bison can graze the same pastures but over separate seasons
- **If you can see bison from the sheep pasture, they may be too close!**
- Keep sheep as far away from bison as possible
- Ensure transport vehicles have not recently carried sheep

WHERE CAN I GET HELP?

Contact your herd health veterinarian to discuss disease control and prevention strategies.

Bison Producers of Alberta

www.bisoncentre.com
info@bisoncentre.com
Ph: 780.955.1995

Alberta Lamb Producers

www.ablamb.ca
info@ablamb.ca
Ph: 403.948.8533

This publication is a joint venture between the Alberta Veterinary Medical Association, Bison Producers of Alberta, Alberta Lamb Producers and Growing Forward.

