

# Protect your bison from anthrax

Putting preventive measures in place to keep animals healthy has been a long-standing and successful practice on Canadian farms.

As a bison producer, you play an important role in keeping animals healthy. This helps to maintain consumer confidence in Canada's high-quality agricultural products, which ultimately contributes to a healthy bottom line.

Recent and predicted climatic conditions in the Canadian prairies have increased the risk of anthrax to livestock this summer. That's why the Canadian Bison Association and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) are calling on bison producers to take extra precautions to protect their animals.

## The facts on anthrax

Anthrax can have devastating effects on bison, cattle, sheep, goats and horses. The spores that cause anthrax are known to exist in the soil across the Canadian prairies. They generally surface during the summer months, when heavy rainfall and flooding is followed by hot, dry temperatures.

## Preventing anthrax

The first step is to discuss anthrax vaccination with your veterinarian before sending your animals out to pasture this summer. This is particularly important if you live in an area where anthrax has been detected before.

While vaccinating your animals is the best protection against anthrax, you should also

- avoid giving hay that was cut close to the soil or feed that had contact with soil to non-vaccinated animals
- thoroughly clean and disinfect equipment and footwear that may have had contact with contaminated soil
- wash clothes worn when tending to sick animals separately from the rest of your household laundry

## Vaccinating bison

Unpublished evidence from previous anthrax outbreaks in bison in the U.S. indicates a 2-ml dose is the most effective for bison. This is higher than the 1-ml dose the Colorado Serum Company vaccine label recommends for cattle.

The Colorado Serum Company has indicated that a 2-ml dose of vaccine produces a higher and longer lasting immunity with no adverse safety issues.

Your veterinarian will advise you on the best option for your particular herd.

### **Signs of an anthrax outbreak**

Often, the first sign of an anthrax outbreak is sudden death of your bison. Animals that do not die suddenly may

- appear distressed
- have difficulty breathing
- stop eating and drinking
- develop swellings, often under the jaw where the head joins the neck and lower abdominal areas
- have a normal or elevated temperature

After death, the animal carcass may leak bloody fluids from body openings and bloat rapidly. Rigor mortis might not occur.

### **Reporting anthrax**

If you suspect anthrax in your herd, avoid handling any carcasses and immediately call your veterinarian or the nearest CFIA office. A complete list of CFIA offices is available online at [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca) in the “Contact Us” section.

### **More information**

More information on anthrax is available on the CFIA website, at [www.inspection.gc.ca](http://www.inspection.gc.ca). You can also call the CFIA at 1-800-442-2342.