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GOOD FACILITIES HELP T.B. TESTING

Owner co-operation is needed for the smooth working of the tuberculin testing of cattle, compulsory in the South-West Land Division. This article describes suitable facilities for the testing and how they operate.

THE Beef Cattle Industry Compensation Act provides for the payment of stamp duty of 1d. in the £1 on all sales of cattle in the South-West Land Division with a maximum stamp duty of 5s. for one animal. A Government subsidy is provided on a £1 for £1 basis and the total sum constitutes the Beef Cattle Compensation Fund.

Compensation for the destruction of animals which react positively to the tuberculin test and animals which are condemned at an abattoir on account of T.B., and fees for tuberculin testing and the administrative costs are paid out of this fund.

The maximum rate of compensation at present for any one animal is £50, except in the case of stud bulls where the maximum rate is £100.

The tuberculin testing of all beef cattle in the South-West Land Division is compulsory and as far as possible testing will be carried out regularly.

Under the regulations, the owner of beef cattle is required to submit them for test when requested to do so, and to render all reasonable assistance with the handling of them. He is also required to provide a crush or other suitable means of restraint to the satisfaction of the person carrying out the testing.

The tuberculin test as applied to cattle requires the intradermal injection, by a veterinarian, of a biological product known as tuberculin, into the skin of the tail fold on one side of the tail. The result is read 72 to 96 hours later by palpating the injected fold and comparing the type of reaction which may be present with the fold on the other side which was not injected.

Facilities Needed

Where facilities are good, testing is performed rapidly and with a minimum of inconvenience. The main requirements are:

- Holding yards.
- A forcing pen.
- A crush.

The holding yards should be of sufficient size to hold all of the cattle to be tested, and substantial enough to prevent cattle escaping. The yards should be easily worked so that a small group of between 10 and 20 cattle can be funnelled into a forcing pen at the bottom of the crush. The crush is the most important consideration when T.B. testing is to be undertaken.

Prime considerations are that it should:

- Be long enough to accommodate at least six adult animals at one time.
General Layout of a Forcing Pen and Crush for Tuberculin Testing of Cattle

- Be 2 feet 3 inches wide (inside measurement) so as to allow the largest animal to pass and yet not allow small stock to turn around.
- Have an exit gate which can be simply but surely closed.
- Have a dividing gate at the bottom of the crush in order to close it from the forcing pen when the crush is full.

The structure need not be elaborate but should be strong. This applies especially to the race, as several beef cows jammed into a race can exert a considerable force which can easily distort the race, making gates difficult to open and shut, and causing animals to escape and thus wasting considerable time. The crush should be approximately 5 ft. high with about 9 in. between rails. Additional facilities which might be considered are a ramp along one side of the crush upon which the veterinarian can stand while injecting the cattle and reading the test, and a two-way exit gate so that positive reactors can be separated immediately from other cattle.

The routine of T.B. testing is simple if the above facilities are supplied. The forcing pen and crush are filled with cattle from the holding yards. The cattle within the crush all face towards the exit gate and are held firmly together limiting movement, so that the veterinarian can start from the last animal allowed into the crush and work towards the first. Once all the animals in the crush have been injected, the exit gate can be opened and the cattle allowed out. The exit gate is then closed and the entrance gate opened to allow more cattle in from the forcing pen. While the veterinarian is injecting these animals the forcing pen can be filled again.

More detailed information on the construction of complete cattle yards appeared in the Journal of Agriculture, March, 1963, Reprints of this article are available to those interested in building cattle facilities.
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