



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CANADA

**BOVINE TUBERCULOSIS IN THE IMMEDIATE
VICINITY OF RIDING MOUNTAIN
NATIONAL PARK IN MANITOBA**

**Report of the Standing Committee on
Agriculture and Agri-Food**

**Paul Steckle, M.P.
Chair**

April 2003

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THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

has the honour to present its

FIRST REPORT

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Committee proceeded to a study on the occurrence of tuberculosis in the elk and deer herds in Riding Mountain National Park, Manitoba. After hearing evidence, the Committee agreed to report to the House as follows:

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CHAIR'S FOREWORD

The Canadian meat and meat products industry represents a market worth about \$12 billion a year. One of the reasons underlying the success of this industry is that after nearly a hundred years of effort and investment by Canadian taxpayers and Canadian livestock producers, Canada is now free from bovine tuberculosis, except for a small area in Manitoba near Riding Mountain National Park.

It is to protect these efforts and investments that the Standing Committee conducted a series of meetings on new cases of bovine tuberculosis in some cattle herds in the vicinity of the Park.

In 1985, the Park was designated a Biosphere Reserve under the Man and the Biosphere Program of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Culture Organization. This means that the ecological integrity of the Park is also an important factor to consider in a strategy aimed at eradicating tuberculosis. The Committee solicited the opinions of farmers, scientists, and government officials, and we are very appreciative of their inputs. As Chair, I join members of the Committee in the belief that the recommendations in this unanimous report will make it possible to maintain the ecological integrity of Riding Mountain National Park and the sustainable economic development of neighbouring communities.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Committee recommends that the Parks Canada Agency ensure that the Superintendent attend all of the meetings with local stakeholders or specifically designate a person to attend and speak on his behalf.

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Committee recommends a proactive culling by the Parks Canada Agency to attain the goal of reducing and maintaining the elk herd at 2,500 animals, at least until bovine tuberculosis is totally eradicated in the area of Riding Mountain National Park.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Committee recommends that the Minister of Agriculture amend the *Health of Animals Act* and regulations to allow compensation for costs directly resulting from the destruction of herds and other actions taken to control the outbreak in the vicinity of Riding Mountain National Park. Compensation must include labour and producer time required for testing the animals, paperwork associated with testing, injuries to cattle and any losses during the testing procedure.

BOVINE TUBERCULOSIS IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY OF RIDING MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK IN MANITOBA

BACKGROUND

The diseases that affect wildlife in Canada, and their spread from wildlife to domestic livestock and vice versa, are not a new problem. Since these diseases can have an impact on human health, the agriculture sector and the viability of indigenous wild species, they demand constant vigilance on the part of the public authorities, and require appropriate intervention strategies. The Standing House of Commons Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food has looked into the problem of bovine tuberculosis, which is currently affecting livestock operations in the immediate vicinity of Riding Mountain National Park.

Riding Mountain National Park is situated in southwest Manitoba. Created in 1929, it covers some 3,000 square kilometres and protects ecosystems representative of the southern boreal plains and plateaux natural region as well as part of the Manitoba escarpment. Including as it does a wide area of remnant woodland, the Park is part of a vast ecological and social landscape where agriculture, tourism and recreation constitute the main activities. One element in a multipurpose regional ensemble, the Park belongs to the Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve, designated in 1985 under the Man and the Biosphere Program of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Outside the Park, farming — in particular, cattle production — occupies a dominant place. There are about 50,000 head of cattle on 700 ranches and farms around the Park, accounting for about 10% of Manitoba's cattle population.

Bovine tuberculosis is a contagious disease caused by an infection in the lymph nodes that spreads to other organs, such as the lungs. Bovine tuberculosis is one of the most infectious forms of tuberculosis, which is why it is a reportable disease under the *Health of Animals Act*. Cattle are the usual host of the bacterium, but bovine tuberculosis can be transmitted from cattle to other kinds of farmed animals, to bison, and to all species of deer in certain conditions. Deer can also transmit the disease among themselves. Transmission is most commonly airborne, when infected animals exhale the bacteria by breathing, coughing or sneezing. Animals run the risk of infecting one another when they share a common watering or feeding site.

Bovine tuberculosis is not found naturally in wild animals such as the cervidae. It is thought that it was introduced into wildlife populations through contact with domestic animals. Samples provided by hunters or taken from captured animals indicate that the disease remains rare among Canadian wildlife. One of the major problems with bovine tuberculosis is its very long incubation period: a great deal of time can elapse between

the moment of infection and the point when the disease becomes detectable. It is possible, for example, to find in a herd an affected animal that may have been infected 10 years earlier.

[...] I think it's important to recognize that Canada embarked on a TB eradication program in the 1960s through herd testing and depopulation of infected herds. Canada reached a TB-free status in the mid-1980s. Please note that TB freedom according to the OIE¹ means a disease prevalence of less than 0.5%. It does not mean zero.

Manitoba was declared TB free in 1986. The USDA — United States Department of Agriculture — officially gave all of Canada TB-free status in 1997. Our continued TB-free status hinges upon regular slaughter surveillance, random TB testing and the absence of finding new infected herd. (*House of Commons, Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, Evidence No. 14— 11:10, Dr. Allan Preston, 2nd Session, 37th Parliament, Ottawa, February 11, 2003*)

In Manitoba, there have been three bovine tuberculosis episodes in the region surrounding Riding Mountain National Park since 1990: one near Rosburn in 1991, which affected five herds; another in the same area in 1997, which affected two herds; and one near Grandview in 2001, which affected only a single herd. During the first outbreak in 1991, a wild elk with tuberculosis was found on a neighbouring farm. It was the first case of tuberculosis in wild elk or deer in the Riding Mountain region. However, a survey of hunters in 1992 found no other cases, and the authorities concluded that it was an isolated incident.

After the second outbreak in 1997, it seemed possible that the wildlife itself could be the source of the bovine tuberculosis. The province of Manitoba, Parks Canada and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) joined forces to test elk, deer and moose killed by hunters in the environs of the Park. Since then, a sampling has been taken every year during hunting season. So far, the authorities have found 10 infected animals — 9 elk and 1 white-tailed deer — out of approximately 3,000 animals tested over five hunting seasons.

Before 2001, scientists regarded cases of tuberculosis in wild elk near the Park as isolated incidents that did not result in spreading the disease either among wild elk populations or in livestock herds. In 2001, however, a third outbreak in cattle, along with five cases of infection in wild elk, convinced the authorities that wild elk in the region of the Park, probably infected by cattle sometime previously, had remained infected and thus constituted a reservoir for retransmission of the disease to cattle. It is now thought that diseased wild animals around the Park are the source of the tuberculosis that appeared in the cattle herd declared infected in 2001 and in another cattle herd in the same region that is currently the subject of a zoo sanitary investigation.

¹ In French in the *Evidence*: Office international des Épizooties.

In 2001, the United States modified its tuberculosis eradication program in response to the infection by wild deer of 25 herds of cattle in Michigan over the previous six years. Not only did the United States adopt a tougher approach to disease control, it also imposed this approach on their major trading partners, in particular Canada and Mexico. These changes led to the recent decision by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to require that cattle from Manitoba test negative for bovine tuberculosis before being exported to the United States.

Faced with this situation, the CFIA held consultations, in collaboration with the government of Manitoba and the industries concerned, to determine what changes should be made to the National Bovine Tuberculosis Eradication Program. The result was the amendment of the *Health of Animals Regulations* to permit the creation of a special tuberculosis eradication area in the Riding Mountain National Park region. Known as the "Riding Mountain Eradication Area" or RMEA, it covers provincial wildlife management sectors 23 and 23A. Some 50,000 head of cattle on 700 ranches and farms are found in these sectors, or 10% of Manitoba's cattle population. The rest of the province is designated the "Manitoba TB eradication area", and like the other provinces enjoys tuberculosis-free status. These amendments to the *Health of Animals Regulations* came into force on January 1, 2003. The RMEA is therefore now considered a "TB Accredited-Advanced" area, which means the risk of livestock infection is very low.

Once the bovine tuberculosis eradication area in the Riding Mountain region is well established, the CFIA will ask the USDA to review the measures the CFIA has introduced and to recognize Manitoba's dual status vis-à-vis bovine tuberculosis. The CFIA also hopes that the United States will reconsider the requirements it has imposed on the importing of Manitoba cattle. It is however important to note that cases of bovine tuberculosis detected in wild animals have no impact on Canada's tuberculosis status unless and until the disease spreads to livestock. Only cases of infection detected in farmed animals have an impact on Canada's tuberculosis status.

When representatives of the Manitoba government appeared before the Committee, they explained that monitoring tests on the cattle herds located within the RMEA had begun in the fall of 2002, and that about 90% of the herds had already been examined; for its part, the CFIA expects to have completed testing by April 2003.² So far seven herds are suspected of bovine tuberculosis infection and have been placed in quarantine; it has been confirmed that two of the herds contain infected animals and they are being culled. It will probably take three to five years of monitoring and ongoing sampling before the RMEA can regain its tuberculosis-free status.

² E-mail from Dr. Sarah Kahn, Director, Animal Health and Production Division, and Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer, Canadian Food Inspection Agency, February 7, 2003.

THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND ECOLOGICAL ASPECTS OF THE DISCOVERY OF BOVINE TUBERCULOSIS IN THE REGION OF RIDING MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK

The Canadian meat and meat products industry (all types of products with the exception of poultry) represents a market worth about \$12 billion a year, which makes it the biggest agri-food processing sector in Canada. Agricultural revenues from the sale of cattle and calves reached close to \$8 billion in 2001, or 22% of total agricultural revenue in Canada. In 2002, there were 13.7 million cattle and calves in Canada, of which 42% were concentrated in Alberta. The value of Canadian exports of beef and beef products totalled \$3.7 billion in 2001, of which \$3.3 billion went to the United States.

As mentioned previously, there are 50,000 cattle on 700 ranches and farms in the region around Riding Mountain National Park that makes up the RMEA established by the CFIA. These 50,000 head represent about 10% of all the cattle in Manitoba and about 1% of all the cattle in Canada. Every year, 32,000 feed cattle and 7,500 cull cows and bulls are shipped out of the Riding Mountain National Park region. Every year the province of Manitoba ships 75,000 cull cows and bulls and 320,000 feed cattle to market. To put this in perspective, Canada overall sells 750,000 cull cows and bulls and 3,200,000 feed cattle every year, and the American market is by far our biggest outlet.³

These figures throw into sharp relief cattle production's economic significance for Canada, and above all the economic and social costs that the government and the community could incur if the focus of contamination in the Riding Mountain region were to spread to the rest of Manitoba and to other groups of Canada's cattle herd. One witness who appeared before the Committee summarized clearly the trade and societal advantages that contingent upon eradicating tuberculosis:

I'd like to begin by saying that after nearly a hundred years of effort and investment by Canadian taxpayers and Canadian livestock producers, all of Canada except for a small area of Manitoba around the Park is now free from bovine tuberculosis. This hard-won status has many impacts. It provides public health benefits, it improves the productivity of livestock operations, and it contributes to the international marketing of Canadian animals and animal products. Importantly, it also protects free-roaming wildlife. However, we recognize that the recent findings of tuberculosis in wild elk and deer in the vicinity of the park threaten our ability to completely eradicate the disease from our livestock populations. (*House of Commons, Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, Evidence No. 4 — 9:10, Dr. Sarah Kahn, 2nd Session, 37th Parliament, Ottawa, November 21, 2002*)

Canada cannot allow its largest agri-food processing sector to be slowed down, perhaps even brought to a halt. The central question thus becomes obvious: what is the best way to protect all those years of effort and investment by the government, the

³ The Manitoba Department of Agriculture and Food, *Bovine Tuberculosis in the Riding Mountain National Park Area of Manitoba*, Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, 2nd Session, 37th Parliament, meeting No. 14, February 11, 2003, Ottawa, p. 10.

taxpayer and Canadian livestock producers, which have made it possible to control tuberculosis and as a result have led to the development of a flourishing cattle sector with economic spin-offs in the billions of dollars?

Moreover, though ecological issues are much harder to measure than the economic and trade aspects, they must not be underestimated. First of all, the realization that elk in the Park are the source of cases of tuberculosis in cattle has obliged the federal government and its agent, Parks Canada, to play a double role: they have to defend and protect an ecosystem that is representative of the southern boreal plains and plateaux but they must also safeguard the development of the more than 40 small communities that depend on agriculture, tourism and recreation in this wooded region of Manitoba. Furthermore, since the Park is part of the Riding Mountain Biosphere Reserve, Canada must live up to its international environmental protection obligations. This means finding a balanced solution between maintaining the Park's ecological integrity and promoting the economic development of the neighbouring communities, which after all do constitute an extension of the Park ecosystem.

Cattle operations with their natural range and high biodiversity pastures and hay lands are much more park friendly than grain farms, which consist of cleared land, fence line to fence line, and grow single species crops. [...] Parks [Canada] must realize that they also need us to achieve their goal of ecological integrity because we control the landscape just outside the park and they must learn to work with us. *(House of Commons, Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, Evidence No. 14 — 11:40, Mr. John Whitaker, 2nd Session, 37th Parliament, Ottawa, February 11, 2003)*

BOVINE TUBERCULOSIS: JURISDICTIONS AND ACTION

The problem of bovine tuberculosis in the Riding Mountain region is complicated by the many uses to which land in the region is put. The presence of a national park and a biosphere reserve within a regional ensemble that is home to 700 ranches and farms and 50,000 head of cattle necessarily means a wide range of stakeholders and jurisdictional responsibilities. There are a number of factors determining which authority will be responsible when the presence of bovine tuberculosis is suspected or detected.

1. Canadian Food Inspection Agency

Primary responsibility rests with the organization mandated by law to deal with species and categories of diseased animals. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is responsible for overseeing the health of Canada's livestock by taking energetic and sustained measures to detect cases of disease and prevent them from spreading among livestock herds. The CFIA's role is clearly defined and very specific.

[...] the agency's mandate is to deal with farmed livestock. We have been conscientiously following the TB eradication policies throughout, in Manitoba as we have elsewhere in Canada, when we've come across a case of tuberculosis.

Findings in wildlife don't affect Canada's TB-free status in the sense of meeting an international standard or in the sense of our trading relationship with partners like the United States. However, findings of TB in wildlife are significant because of the potential there for this type of reservoir of infection, for there to be extension to farmed herds.

When a case is detected in wildlife, the CFIA tests all [domestic] herds within a ten-kilometre radius. This is our response; this is the way we translate that into action: to try to root out any cases of infection that could somehow be associated with a finding in wildlife. We have followed this policy pretty consistently. (*House of Commons, Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, Evidence No. 4 — 9:10, Dr. Sarah Kahn, 2nd Session, 37th Parliament, Ottawa, November 21, 2002*)

Given the serious repercussions of bovine tuberculosis and its long incubation period, Canada adheres to a strict program of monitoring and eradication when the disease appears in cattle or farmed bison, elk or deer. As soon as a case is diagnosed in a herd, the CFIA launches an in-depth investigation and takes steps to eradicate the focus of infection and make sure it does not spread. In all confirmed cases, all susceptible animals that have been exposed to the disease are slaughtered and their owners compensated. All animals sold or purchased are tracked down and tested, as well as the stock on adjacent and neighbouring farms or ranches. Due to these exhaustive measures bovine tuberculosis has been virtually eliminated from Canadian livestock.

In the specific case of cattle herds in the Riding Mountain region, the CFIA strategy has three key elements:

- amending the *Health of Animals Regulations*, as noted above, which has resulted in the establishment of the "Riding Mountain Eradication Area";
- monitoring all cattle and bison herds inside the RMEA via diagnostic tests, a procedure that should be completed by April 2003;
- introducing containment measures for herds, so that cattle and farmed bison cannot be moved from the RMEA without a permit from the CFIA. The purpose of containment is to reduce the risk of a spread of tuberculosis caused by movement of the Riding Mountain area livestock into other parts of Manitoba and other provinces. All cattle and farmed bison in a herd will have to be declared disease-free following diagnostic tests in the RMEA over the previous 36 months for a movement permit to be issued.

The CFIA does not play the same role when tuberculosis is detected in wild animals. Animals that range freely or are found on provincial Crown land come under provincial responsibility, while in the case of a national park like Riding Mountain it is Parks Canada that is responsible. The CFIA does not have a program specifically designed to control disease in wildlife populations, although it can provide support to

agencies that do have jurisdiction over wildlife populations in the form of data, advice and scientific support, such as carrying out laboratory analyses for them.

2. Parks Canada

Parks Canada's mandate is to protect and promote nationally significant examples of Canada's natural heritage for present and future generations. The Parks Canada Agency has primary responsibility for protecting and restoring the ecological integrity of the national parks system. To make this possible, Parks Canada takes an ecosystem-based approach to management, and works with partners in the regions where national parks are situated.

As one of Parks Canada's representatives told the Committee:

[T]he key indicator of the health of a national park is having a viable, healthy, and sustainable wildlife population, along with associated habitat. One of the key challenges to maintaining the health of a park is to manage the diseases in its wildlife species, so healthy wildlife remain a key part of the ecology of that park.

[...]

As an agency, the protection and the restoration of ecological integrity is indeed our first priority, as stated in the *National Parks Act*.

The way we manage this particular process in relation to this particular issue of wildlife disease is really one where we see bovine tuberculosis in our wildlife, within our parks, as a serious problem. In fact, it is a stressor that is affecting the native population of elk, and potentially deer, within this national park. For that reason, we are at the table leading the committee with the stakeholders in the management of this issue. [...] We see the management of ecological integrity being based on sound science [...] (*House of Commons, Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, Evidence No. 4 — 9:30, Mr. Mike Wong, 2nd Session, 37th Parliament, Ottawa, November 21, 2002*)

According to Parks Canada, the incidence of the disease among wild animals is low, between 1% and 3% depending on the way the region is broken down geographically. These data are based on samples taken since 1997 from some 3,000 moose, deer and elk. Since 1991, cases of tuberculosis have been confirmed in 5 cattle herds as well as in 10 elk and 1 white-tailed deer. The cases were detected within a broader regional ecosystem that contains a herd of elk numbering a steady 3,500. There are about 8,000 deer in the region as well.⁴ Of the 712 elk tested in the past two years none was found positive.

⁴ House of Commons, Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, *Evidence No. 4 — 9:35*, Mr. Greg Fenton (Field Unit Superintendent, Riding Mountain National Park, Parks Canada Agency), 2nd Session, 37th Parliament, Ottawa, November 21, 2002.

Action by the Parks Canada Agency on bovine tuberculosis falls within the general framework for intervention created by the various stakeholders who make up a federal-provincial working committee formed in 2000. The Inter-agency Management Committee consists of representatives of Parks Canada, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, and Manitoba's departments of Conservation, and of Agriculture and Food. The Manitoba Cattle Producers Association and the Manitoba Wildlife Federation are also influential and participate actively in the committee's work, providing informed opinions and advice to those responsible. Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has now joined the committee as well.

The working committee has developed a five-year program to manage bovine tuberculosis in Manitoba. The program, endorsed and funded by all members of the committee, has three long-term goals:

- achieving and retaining "tuberculosis-free" status for the province's livestock;
- eradicating bovine tuberculosis in wild animals that pose a risk to agriculture, while maintaining healthy, viable wild populations in the regional ecosystem;
- minimizing interaction between wild animals and livestock, to halt the spread of the disease through mutual re-infection.

The five-year program consists of four activity sectors: monitoring and detection, control and prevention, research, and communications and education.

With respect to monitoring and detection, Parks Canada is using its Riding Mountain National Park Field Laboratory to analyse samples taken from elk, deer and moose in the reserves outside the Park, mostly by hunters. In cooperation with Manitoba's departments of Conservation, and of Agriculture and Food, Parks Canada is also carrying out two types of aerial surveys every year. The first consists in surveying the relative abundance of elk and moose in the Park and around it. The second consists in breaking down the figures to determine the mother-young ratio and the gender ratio. Since 1995, the laboratory has collected and analyzed approximately 3,000 samples. While the surveys are primarily intended to set hunting quotas outside the Park, they will also be used to evaluate the success of future herd reduction measures.

The control and prevention activity sector has three aspects. The first of these consists in building fences in order to reduce contact between wild animals and cattle in areas where they have a tendency to concentrate, primarily around feeding sites in farmers' fields and hay stocks outside the boundaries of the Park. The necessary materials will be provided free of charge and assistance will be given to build fences around the hay stocks of some 250 farms. The Parks Canada Agency also indicated that it will enhance the barrier fencing program. The Agency will allocate a minimum of \$40,000 this year in new funds, which will allow for the construction of 75 additional barrier fences in high-risk areas. Along with Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, it will also

solicit funding from the Manitoba Rural Adaptations Council, a proposal supported by the Inter-agency Committee and the Riding Mountain Liaison Committee.⁵

The second aspect of control and prevention involves the making of regulations. Manitoba's departments of Conservation, and of Agriculture and Food have already issued regulations banning the use of bait by hunters and the feeding of wild animals outside the Park. In addition, the hunting regulations have been modified to allow hunters to take more wild elk and deer outside the Park.

The third aspect of the monitoring and prevention activity involves the setting up by Parks Canada of a controlled burn program within the limits of the Park, one of the aims being to improve the elk habitat and encourage them to remain inside the Park's boundaries for longer periods during the summer and winter months.

Research constitutes the third activity sector in the five-year management program. The studies that have been carried out include one on the distribution, movement and behaviour of elk both in the Park and on adjacent land. Another deals with agricultural activities: it analyses management practices on the adjacent farmland and assesses the presence and behaviours of elk and deer on farmland.

Lastly, the five-year program includes a communications and education activity sector. The purpose is to provide reliable and timely information on bovine tuberculosis to residents of the Riding Mountain region, both about the management measures that have been taken and about the impact of the disease on the cattle-producing industry and on wildlife. Other action is planned to ensure the diffusion of timely information and to enable the public, associations and interested parties to participate in the program's development and implementation.

The Committee did however pick up contradictory signals about the communications plans being implemented to develop an appropriate strategy to fight bovine tuberculosis. While stakeholders lauded the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's rapid action and transparency, it was otherwise for the Parks Canada Agency. Parks Canada's reluctance to admit that the Riding Mountain elk herd was the focus of infection, and to acknowledge its responsibilities, seems to have done considerable damage to its reputation and undermined its relations with the Park's immediate neighbours. At their second appearance before the Committee, Parks Canada officials indicated that the Agency was "establishing a new multi-stakeholder advisory committee on which the Park Superintendent will sit." Officials also stated that the Agency will hold more information meetings as part of its ongoing efforts to get timely information to all parties.⁶ Although the announcement comes late in the process, the Committee welcomes this new initiative

⁵ House of Commons, Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, *Evidence* No. 18 — 11:10, Mr. Alan Latourelle, 2nd Session, 37th Parliament, Ottawa, February 27, 2003.

⁶ Ibid.

but considers that a relationship of trust between Parks Canada and local stakeholders still has to be established. Therefore and for greater certainty:

RECOMMENDATION 1

The Committee recommends that the Parks Canada Agency ensure that the Superintendent attend all of the meetings with local stakeholders or specifically designate a person to attend and speak on his behalf.

The Parks Canada Agency, like all the organizations represented on the Inter-agency Management Committee, realizes that there is no easy or ready-made solution when it comes to eliminating bovine tuberculosis in cervidae populations in the Riding Mountain region. As the federal agency responsible for this national park, it considers, as do the provincial authorities that manage wildlife outside the Park that the elk and deer populations in the regional ecosystem cannot simply be wiped out. It is however generally agreed that the elk population must be reduced, and measures taken to keep wild animals away from livestock, as planned in the five-year management program. The Agency is currently spending \$470,000 per year on the TB issue and five people are assigned to it. In addition to disease surveillance, the Agency continues to monitor the size and movement of the regional elk population. According to the Parks Canada Agency, results of the 2003 aerial survey done in collaboration with Manitoba Natural Resources indicate that the elk population has declined by 29% in the last year, from 3,592 to 2,785 animals, with a margin of error of plus or minus 300 elk.⁷ In addition to the hunter-killed survey, Parks Canada Agency's testing program will be increased to 150 elk, which means that about 500 animals could be tested per year.⁸ This scientifically based test program for elk inside Riding Mountain National Park will focus on the older population of elk and on the western end of the park. Of the 115 elk tested so far in 2003, 9 had inconclusive tests, which means that these elk could not be categorized as "TB-free", nor could they be identified with having the disease.⁹

Current scientific knowledge indicates that, in a natural habitat, bovine tuberculosis does not normally persist for long periods. For it to last for any length of time, there must be prolonged inter-animal contact. In this natural habitat, then, given the low rate of bovine tuberculosis, the disease should disappear after a certain period. It is believed,

⁷ Parks Canada strongly believes that the growing wolf population in and around Riding Mountain is one of the key reasons in the recent decline of the elk population (House of Commons, Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, *Evidence* No. 18 — 11:10, Mr. Alan Latourelle, 2nd Session, 37th Parliament, Ottawa, February 27, 2003).

⁸ House of Commons, Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, *Evidence* No. 18 — 12:05, Dr. Stephen Woodley, 2nd Session, 37th Parliament, Ottawa, February 27, 2003

⁹ House of Commons, Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, *Evidence* No. 25, Parks Canada Agency's presentation, 2nd Session, 37th Parliament, Ottawa, April 8, 2003.

however, that reducing the wild animal populations, and especially those of elk and deer, is likely to accelerate the disease's disappearance.¹⁰

When she appeared before the Committee, the Honourable Sheila Copps, Minister of Canadian Heritage responsible for the Parks Canada Agency, mentioned that when there is a problem such as the TB being potentially transmitted between the cattle and the elk, there is a group of various stakeholders and scientists that is established. According to the Minister, the idea of the group is to gather around the table the best brains who are in the business of protecting the cattle, and to make recommendations. When questioned on a potential cull, the Minister stated that she would “absolutely” recommend a cull to Cabinet, should the group advise her to do so.¹¹

As mentioned by a witness, although selective culling of infected animals is impractical and the ability to eradicate tuberculosis from wildlife populations is unproven, the objective of culling is to reduce the transmission of the disease so that the number of new cases is inadequate to maintain the disease.¹² In that context, the reduced population level must be maintained over many years to have an effect. Therefore:

RECOMMENDATION 2

The Committee recommends a proactive culling by the Parks Canada Agency to attain the goal of reducing and maintaining the elk herd at 2,500 animals, at least until bovine tuberculosis is totally eradicated in the area of Riding Mountain National Park.

Finally, some witnesses who appeared before the Committee, and letters from the Riding Mountain Regional Liaison Committee — an organization representing 13 rural municipalities around Riding Mountain National Park — indicated that compensation based solely on animals' market value was not sufficient, and that other costs associated with the testing and destruction of a herd should also be covered. Because of its experience gained during the outbreak of scrapie on sheep in 1998, the Committee is aware that the government's liability under the *Health of Animals Act* is limited (Section 50), and that the amount of compensation payable shall be the animals' market value at the time of the evaluation. However, the Committee is also aware that the Minister of Agriculture can amend the Act and regulations so that compensation is more in line with the real loss of production capacity, as he did in 1998 to better reflect the real market value of sheep. Therefore:

¹⁰ House of Commons, Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, *Evidence* No. 4 — 9:45, Mr. Greg Fenton, 2nd Session, 37th Parliament, Ottawa, November 21, 2002.

¹¹ House of Commons, Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, *Evidence* No. 25 — 9:40, 2nd Session, 37th Parliament, Ottawa, April 8, 2003

¹² Dr. Gary Wobeser, Cooperative Wildlife Health Centre, Department of Veterinary Pathology, Western College of Veterinary Medicine, University of Saskatoon, Summary of presentation to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, Ottawa, February 27, 2003.

RECOMMENDATION 3

The Committee recommends that the Minister of Agriculture amend the *Health of Animals Act* and regulations to allow compensation for costs directly resulting from the destruction of herds and other actions taken to control the outbreak in the vicinity of Riding Mountain National Park. Compensation must include labour and producer time required for testing the animals, paperwork associated with testing, injuries to cattle and any losses during the testing procedure.

CONCLUSION

Canada's approach to eradicating tuberculosis in its livestock is straightforward and stringent. This to a great extent is what has enabled Canada to obtain tuberculosis-free status. On the other hand, as noted by the representative of the Manitoba Cattle Producers Association, the Committee considers that the pure and simple elimination of the entire elk herd in Riding Mountain National Park is not the ultimate solution. Moreover, witnesses made the point that the logistics of such an elimination would be daunting. The Committee does however realize as well that it is imperative to develop a strategy for eradicating tuberculosis in the elk herd, because the economic, ecological and social costs are very high. Canada cannot run the risk of losing an agricultural industry that generates annual revenues of \$8 billion, any more than Manitoba and Canada can, ecologically or socially, allow a Canadian park that is part of a UNESCO biosphere reserve to gain a reputation as a focus of tuberculosis. The Committee considers that the recommendations in this report will make it possible to maintain the ecological integrity of Riding Mountain National Park as well as the sustainable economic development of neighbouring communities.

APPENDIX A LIST OF WITNESSES

Associations and Individuals	Date	Meeting
Canadian Food Inspection Agency Sarah Kahn, Director	21/11/2002	4
Parks Canada Agency Greg Fenton, Field Unit Superintendent, Riding Mountain National Park Mike Wong, Executive Director, Ecological Integrity		
Department of Agriculture and Food of Manitoba Allan Preston, Director	11/02/2003	14
Manitoba Cattle Producers Association Garth Routledge		
As Individuals Ray Armbruster John Whitaker		
Canadian Bison Association Gavin Conacher, Executive Director Shaun Grant, Chairman Tom Olson, President	27/02/2003	18
Parks Canada Agency Alan Latourelle, Chief Executive Officer Mike Wong, Executive Director, Ecological Integrity Stephen Woodley, Chief Scientist, Ecosystem Sciences		
University of Saskatchewan Gary Wobeser, Professor, Veterinary Pathology		
Department of Canadian Heritage Hon. Sheila Copps, Minister	08/04/2003	25
Parks Canada Agency Alan Latourelle, Chief Executive Officer		

APPENDIX B LIST OF BRIEFS

Canadian Food Inspection Agency

Department of Agriculture and Food of Manitoba

Department of Canadian Heritage

Parks Canada Agency

John Whitaker

REQUEST FOR GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

A copy of the relevant Minutes of Proceedings (*Meetings Nos. 4, 14, 18 and 25 including the present report*) is tabled.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Steckle, M.P.
Huron-Bruce
Chair

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Tuesday, April 8, 2003
(Meeting No. 25)

The Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food met in a televised session at 9:05 a.m. this day, in Room 253-D, Centre Block, the Chair, Paul Steckle, presiding.

Members of the Committee present: David L. Anderson, Gérard Binet, Rick Borotsik, Garry Breitreuz, Claude Duplain, Mark Eyking, Howard Hilstrom, Louis Plamondon, Dick Proctor, Paul Steckle and Rose-Marie Ur.

In attendance: From the Library of Parliament: Jean-Luc Bourdages, Analyst; Jean-Denis Fréchette, Principal; Lorie Srivastava, Analyst.

Appearing: From the House of Commons: The Honourable Sheila Copps, Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Witnesses: From the Parks Canada Agency: Alan Latourelle, Chief Executive Officer. *From the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food:* Mark Corey, Assistant Deputy Minister, Market and Industry Services Branch; Ian Thomson, Director, Western Hemisphere Trade Policy Division, International Trade Policy Directorate; Alan Schlachter, Trade Policy Analyst, Western Hemisphere Trade Policy Division, International Trade Policy Directorate. *From the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade:* Phil Calvert, Deputy Director, Technical Barriers and Regulations Division. *From the Canadian Cattlemen's Association:* Dennis Laycraft, Executive Vice-President; Neil Jahnke, President; Jim Caldwell, Director, Government Affairs. *From the Canadian Pork Council:* Edouard Asnong, President; Martin Rice, Executive Director; Catherine Scovil, Executive Associate. *From the Manitoba Pork Council:* Larry Friesen.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Committee resumed consideration of the occurrence of tuberculosis in the elk and deer herds in Riding Mountain National Park, Manitoba.

The Honourable Sheila Copps and Alan Latourelle made opening statements and answered questions.

At 10:00 a.m., the sitting was suspended.

At 10:05 a.m., the Committee proceeded to sit *in camera*.

The Committee resumed consideration of a draft report on the issue of the occurrence of tuberculosis in the elk and deer herds in Riding Mountain National Park, Manitoba.

It was agreed, — That the draft report, as amended, be adopted.

It was agreed, — That the Chair, Clerk and researchers be authorized to make such grammatical and editorial changes as may be necessary without changing the substance of the report.

It was agreed, — That pursuant to Standing Order 109, the Committee request the government to table a comprehensive response to the report.

It was agreed, — That the Chair present the report, as amended, to the House.

The Committee proceeded to consider its future business.

It was agreed, — That the Committee invite the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food on April 29, 2003, and departmental officials at three subsequent meetings, to study the Main Estimates 2003-2004 and the Agricultural Policy Framework.

It was agreed, — That the Committee hold two meetings to study the *U.S. Farm Bill*.

It was agreed, — That the Committee invite the Pest Management Control Agency to follow up on the minor use policy.

It was agreed, — That the Committee hold two further meetings to study the approval of genetically modified wheat in Canada and its effect on Canadian agriculture.

It was agreed, — That the Committee hold a briefing session on the current World Trade Organization negotiations.

At 10:55 a.m., the meeting was suspended.

At 11:05 a.m., the Committee proceeded to sit in public.

Pursuant to Standing Order 108(2), the Committee proceeded to the consideration of the United States country-of-origin labelling policy.

Mark Corey and Ian Thomson made opening statements and with the other witnesses, answered questions.

Edouard Asnong, Neil Jahnke, Martin Rice and Larry Friesen made opening statements and with Dennis Laycraft and Jim Caldwell answered questions.

At 12:57 p.m., the Committee adjourned to the call of the Chair

Bibiane Ouellette
Clerk of the Committee