

Trichomoniasis, or Trich, is a disease that can result in major economic loss if proper care to prevent it does not take place. Several weeks ago we briefly discussed Trich and how it can negatively impact a cow herd (see November's article [Calf Crop %- Part Two](#)). This week we will take a deeper look at Trich and examine risks, treatment, and identification of this disease.

Trich is a venereal disease, which means that it is transmitted by sexual contact with an affected mate. Therefore, virgin bulls and females cannot contract this disease. The main carriers of Trich are bulls because once they are infected they will remain infected for life. As of right now, there is no known effective treatment available, so the best "treatment" for infected bulls is to send them to slaughter. However, cows handle the disease differently. Infected cows have been known to clean themselves of the disease after several heat cycles. Some cows may require as many as six months to completely rid themselves of Trich.

Unfortunately, there are no obvious signs of Trich in males, and the only visible sign of the disease in females is pregnancy loss. Typically, Trich infected herds will yield long calving seasons (3-8 months) in conjunction with a calf crop of 50-70%. Due to the fact that Trich is nearly impossible to diagnose by simple observation of the naked eye, bulls should be tested before they are turned out on the cows for breeding.

Using a PCR culture, which yields results in about a week, a producer can determine if his bull is infected before exposing him to the rest of the herd. The PCR Trich test should be performed at the time of fertility testing just prior to the start of breeding season. Borrowed or rented bulls should not be used on your herd unless their status is known, and purchased non-virgin bulls should be tested before they are added to the herd. Because Trich is a venereal disease, it is not necessary to test virgin bulls or females prior to breeding.

Again, Trich can only enter a herd via infected bulls or females, and transmission of the disease can be from infected bulls to cows, or from infected cows to bulls. In order to eliminate Trich from an infected herd, cows must be given adequate time to clear the infection, and infected bulls should be eliminated from the herd altogether.

The economic toll that Trich can take on a calf crop is far too great to not have bulls tested prior to breeding season. For more information concerning this profit robbing disease, or to have your cattle tested for Trich, please contact us.