

FREE Tick Disease Testing for NJ Cattle Through 2026

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture (NJDA) is offering free testing to NJ cattle to determine the impact of *Theileria orientalis* Ikeda, a disease transmitted by the Asian longhorned tick, on cattle in New Jersey.

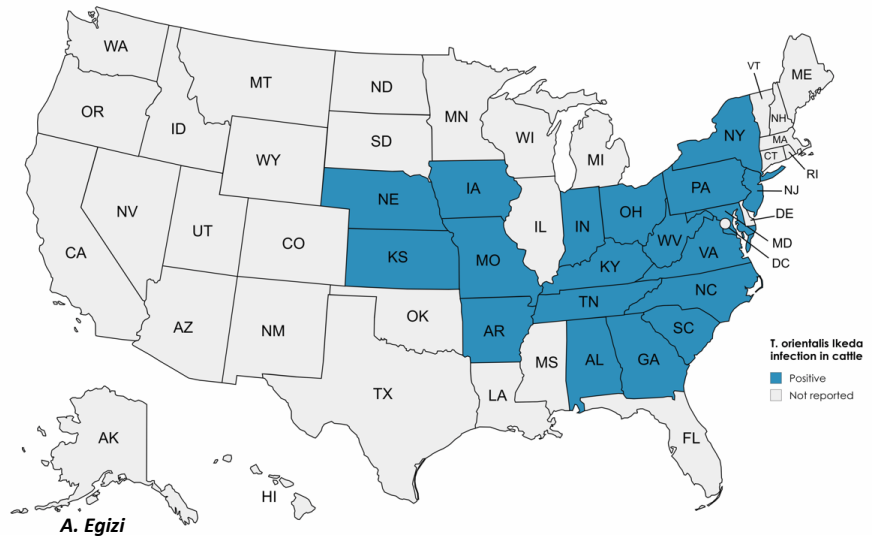
Program highlights/benefits:

- Free disease testing to rule in/out *Theileria* and *Anaplasma* as cause of illness in your sick cattle.
- Test results—knowledge of what’s in your herd so you can make better decisions with herd management.
- Participation helps the New Jersey cattle industry by building a better picture of what’s going on in the state so the industry can stay strong.

What is *Theileria orientalis* Ikeda?

T. orientalis is a blood-borne parasite that infects cattle. While there are several types of *T. orientalis* found in the United States, only the Ikeda strain is known to cause severe illness or death in animals. This parasite is an emerging concern in the U.S. and was first detected in New Jersey cattle in Warren County in November 2024. Since then, it has been detected in five additional cattle herds in Hunterdon, Somerset, and Warren counties through diligent testing by herd veterinarians.

Outside of New Jersey, the parasite has affected herds in over a dozen states, including Virginia.



How is it spread?

T. orientalis is transmitted through the bite of an ixodid (hard) tick. An emerging vector (transmitter) for this disease is the Asian longhorned tick, *Haemaphysalis longicornis*. This tick was first identified in Hunterdon County NJ in 2017 and is now widespread in NJ and found across 23 other U.S. states. This tick is active in NJ from March through October or early November. Infections cannot spread directly from animal to animal—an animal must be bitten by an infected tick to become infected.



Matt Bertone

Asian longhorned ticks
(above and right)



Graham Hickling



What are the signs of disease in cattle?

- Anemia (reduced blood cells)
- Inappetence (lack of appetite)
- Pale Gums
- Jaundice (yellowing of skin, eyes)
- Weakness
- Fever
- Weight loss
- Death
- Elevated respiratory and heart rates

Infections can range from subclinical (no obvious signs) to severe. Pregnant heifers, calves, and animals recently introduced to the area are the most susceptible to infection.

Though a threat to cattle, *T. orientalis* Ikeda is not a threat to human health. Humans cannot become sick from contact with affected cattle or consuming their meat.

How is it treated?

Unfortunately, there is no approved treatment or vaccine for *T. orientalis* Ikeda in cattle in the United States. Therefore, the best method of prevention is tick control. Recommended strategies include veterinary-approved pesticide treatment (such as pour-on and ear tags) and regularly inspecting animals for ticks. Talk to your veterinarian about tick management strategies and products. If an animal is found to be positive for *T. orientalis* Ikeda and has clinical signs, supportive care is provided. Even after symptoms are cleared, animals can remain infected for life and can continue to be a source of infection if ticks are present.

How you can help!

NJDA wants to work with cattle producers who may have sick cattle to determine the status of *T. orientalis* Ikeda in New Jersey cattle. As an emerging disease in NJ, understanding how many animals carry *T. orientalis* Ikeda and its geographic distribution in the state will help determine the impact of this disease on NJ cattle. Results will guide the NJDA and cattle veterinarians' ability to respond to this new disease.

Cattle producers interested in participating should contact their herd veterinarian about the testing offered by NJDA free of charge.

Testing is sponsored by a grant for the 2026 tick season and will be subject to availability, so act fast to take advantage of this testing offer!

If you have any questions or would like to learn more about this opportunity, please call the NJDA Division of Animal Health at 609-671-6400.

