

# *Theileria orientalis Ikeda* in Cattle

Stakeholder fact sheet | Current as of April 2026



*Theileria orientalis Ikeda* is an emerging tick-borne disease of cattle. It is caused by a blood parasite called a protozoan — not a bacteria or virus. The parasite can damage red blood cells and cause anemia. In New Jersey, it was first confirmed in cattle in Warren County in November 2024. It has also been detected in additional herds in Warren, Hunterdon, Salem, and Somerset counties. Because the full extent in New Jersey is still being determined, cattle owners in every county should use strong tick prevention practices.

## Fast facts

- Mainly affects cattle; other species may rarely become infected, usually without obvious illness.
- Spread most often by infected Asian longhorned ticks.
- Sick cattle may look like anaplasmosis cases because both can cause anemia.
- Recovered or healthy-looking cattle can remain lifelong carriers.
- There is no approved treatment or vaccine in the United States, so prevention matters.

## Signs to watch for

- Weakness, tiredness, lagging behind the herd, or reluctance to move.
- Reduced appetite, weight loss, or drop in milk production.
- Pale gums; yellowing of eyes, skin, or gums.
- Fever, elevated heart rate, or increased breathing.
- Abortions, sudden death, or severe illness in calves, pregnant heifers, or newly introduced cattle.

## Important

Many infected cattle show no obvious signs but can still carry the parasite and serve as a source of infection for ticks.

## How it spreads

- A tick feeds on an infected animal and later bites another animal.
- The parasite does not spread through casual nose-to-nose contact like a respiratory disease.
- Blood transfer can also spread by tools. Avoid sharing needles, tattoo equipment, dehorning, castration tools, or other equipment between animals unless cleaned and disinfected appropriately.

## Prevention: reduce ticks and reduce blood transfer

- Work with your veterinarian on tick control products that fit your animals and production type.
- Check cattle for ticks, especially ears, tailhead, under tail, between hind legs, and udder folds.
- Keep grass short around handling areas, remove brush, and limit access to heavily tick-infested areas when possible.
- Use a new needle for each animal whenever possible. Clean and disinfect equipment between animals.
- Inspect new cattle for ticks and health concerns before adding them to the herd.

### Questions?

NJDA Division of Animal Health  
609-671-6400

For sick cattle: contact your veterinarian first.  
Ask them about available no-cost testing for eligible sick cattle through NDJA.

[nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/ah](http://nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/ah)

# Managing risk on your farm

## Why this matters in New Jersey

- The first confirmed New Jersey cattle case was detected in Warren County in November 2024.
- Additional detections have been reported in Warren, Hunterdon, Salem, and Somerset counties.
- The Asian longhorned tick was first identified in New Jersey in Hunterdon County in 2017 and is now widespread in the state.
- We still do not know the full extent of *Theileria* in New Jersey cattle, so prevention is important beyond counties with known detections.

## What to do if cattle are sick

- Call your veterinarian. A blood test is needed to confirm *Theileria orientalis* Ikeda.

## Diagnosis and herd planning

- A test is needed to confirm infection. Clinical signs alone are not enough because signs can look like anaplasmosis or other causes of anemia.
- Your veterinarian may recommend bloodwork and other tests based on the animal's condition.
- A positive animal may remain infected for life. Work with your veterinarian on herd-specific management, especially before moving, selling, or introducing animals.

## Tick-control checklist

- Ask your veterinarian which tick products are appropriate for your herd.
- Follow label directions, withdrawal times, and retreatment intervals.
- Rotate and manage pastures to avoid heavy tick areas when practical.
- Mow or clear brush near fence lines, handling areas, and loafing areas.
- Check animals routinely during tick season and after movement from tick-heavy areas.
- Keep records of tick treatments, clinical signs, testing, and new animal introductions.

## Clean equipment between animals

- Use single-use needles whenever possible.
- Clean and disinfect blood-contaminated tools such as dehorners, tattoo equipment, castration equipment, and surgical instruments between animals.
- Do not use the same sleeve, needle, or blood-contaminated equipment across multiple animals.

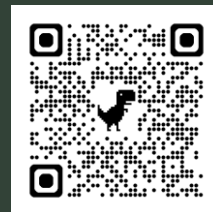
## Bottom line

If cattle appear sick, call your veterinarian. Prevention, prompt diagnosis, and good tick control are the most useful tools currently available.

## New Jersey Department of Agriculture Division of Animal Health

PO Box 400, Trenton, NJ 08625 | 609-671-6400 |

This fact sheet is intended for cattle owners and should not replace veterinary advice.



[nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/ah](https://nj.gov/agriculture/divisions/ah)