Good afternoon everyone. My name is Brad Osadczuk and I’m a 3rd generation rancher from Jenner AB. My family and I operate a cow/calf operation that consists of a red angus/simmental cow herd. Off the ranch, I keep myself busy within the community and cattle industry. I’m an advisory counselor for special areas number 2 and I sit on the Ag Service Board. I am also a delegate of Alberta beef producers for 4 years and I’m currently sitting on the board for my second year. I’m a director for our two community pastures and I also sit on the board for Bow Slope Shipping.

In the fall of 2016 my Ranch was at the center of the biggest TB investigation our country has ever seen and I want to share the story with you. I feel it is important that people in our industry have the facts and know exactly what went down.

In the middle of August 2016, I rounded up a small group of cattle. These cow / calf pairs are the left overs that don't make the cut to go out to Summer pasture for one reason or another. As part of my management program I ween the calves off this group early and sell the cows as culls before the seasonal decline in the market which usually starts late summer / early fall.

On September 1st I sent that group of cows to market. A few weeks went by and life was rolling along as usual. It was the evening of September 22nd and I had gotten in the house really late, my wife Elaine said there was a message on the phone from the CCIA and I was wondering “what now?”

I thought it was probably a stray cow or calf or something. when I scrolled through the missed calls it was actually the CFIA. The message on the phone said to call back ASAP, so I did.

So, when the CFIA vet answered, he told me who he was and asked me if I had sold a cow through the auction mart on September 1st. I said yes, I did, he said you better sit down, I have some news, and it's not good. He proceeded to tell me that one of the cows I sold ended up in the USA to
be harvested and tested positive for bovine tuberculosis. I asked him what does this mean? He said it’s bad. Your cattle are quarantined, there will be an investigation and your herd will most likely be destroyed.

That conversation took place at 10:45 p.m., so it was a long rough night. you can imagine the things that were going through my head. He had told me enough that I knew we were in big trouble. I was pretty sure that the border for our export cattle would close again, like with BSE and the cattle industry was going to go broke and it was all going to be because of me.

In the morning, the first thing I did was call my dad. I told him what was going on and I would handle it, he was pretty good with it considering. The second call I made was to Bob Lowe. Bob is a friend and was the chairman of ABP at the time, and I knew that Bob would know what to do. Bob went to work on the political front.

On September 28th the CFIA finally showed up to officially quarantine us. They told us that all of our cattle and all other animals on the place would be destroyed. They explained that any other cattle that co-mingled with ours would be destroyed as well.

Then I explained our operation to them, how many cattle we ran, and how many different places, and the fact that we ran in two different community pastures with many different ranching operations.

It was at this point that the CFIA realized how big this investigation was going to be. The CFIA reps were truly shocked and said they would gather all of our information and figure out where to go from here.

It was at this point that the communication from the CFIA fell apart, pretty much any questions that we had were answered with “we don’t know”. They had dozens of ranches quarantined and would not even answer their phones. They were calling ranchers, telling them they were
quarantined and in some cases would not communicate with them for close to two weeks.

It was October when they finally told us that we needed to get all of our cattle together so they could test them. So we started. We brought home the cows from both Community pastures and the herd we had running in Saskatchewan.

In the first week of October we got the call that they would be out soon to start testing the herd. we were pushing hard to get the testing started.

I was sure that the Mexican strain of TB that the Americans said that they had found wasn't from my cow and I was eager to prove it. It's important to tell you that we had been told by this point that the US said we have TB and that was that, our herd was going to be destroyed no matter what the testing found.

Canada's TB status is “eradicated” and therefore any herd that TB is found in, will be destroyed in order to keep our TB-free status for World Trade purposes.

We finally got started testing on October 17th, almost one month after we got the call. It might not seem like that long, but to us it was an eternity! We had been living with so many “we don't knows” and in decisions that we wanted to get something happening and get closure, little did we know we were a long way from that.

On October 19th, an information meeting was held in the hockey rink in Jenner. The news was out and people wanted to know what was going on.

Because the whole Community was affected, we decided we needed to stick together and handle things as a group with one voice. We formed a legal committee, a media committee, and a compensation committee.
Through conversations with many people who had knowledge on previous CFIA dealings, told me that I better get a good lawyer and call my MP, so I did. I called my MLA and my MP. I called everyone and anyone I could track down for help. I talked to dozens and dozens of people, told them my story and asked for advice.

On November 5th I was contacted by Mr. David Anderson, a Saskatchewan MP and the Federal Agriculture critic for the conservative party. He asked for a meeting with us to get the story straight from the horse's mouth. We sat at my parent’s kitchen table for the better part of the day. He took pages and pages of notes. When he left he said he would keep in touch, I wasn't sure what that meant but it felt like a step in the right direction.

Around the same time the depopulation of our heard started. The first day 200 calves left our place in sealed liners. Because they were under 12 months of age they couldn't accurately test them. They were hauled to Lacombe to be killed, then the carcasses were hauled to Lethbridge to be rendered, if you can imagine we were ordered by the CFIA to pay the trucking and cost of destruction. The CFIA would reimburse us later.

This soon changed when many outraged ranchers refused to cooperate. I agreed to it because at the time we had no other choices. All of this before we even had test results back on our herd, or any compensation finalized. The next few weeks they proceeded to haul away our herd.

It was November 15th when I got the call about the test results on our herd. They said we had five more cattle test positive for the same Mexican strain of TB, now it was 6 in total. This really hit me hard. Up until now I was sure all of this was just another bunch of BS from the Americans.

This news didn't make any difference to the investigation, but it was disappointing nonetheless. I was still having a hard time believing we had a
Mexican strain of TB never-before-seen in Canada, and never seen in wildlife in the US.

The very next day, I got a call from someone in Ottawa, advising me that I was to be in Ottawa on Monday, which was only 5 days away. I was to be a witness at the AG standing committee hearing on the TB investigation. They emailed me with the address and room number on Parliament Hill and what time my hearing was. This was a little intimidating to say the least. I immediately called Bob Lowe and said what do you think this means? He says well I guess that means we're going to Ottawa! And we did!

Bob, myself and 3 other ABP board members flew to Ottawa and met with the staff of the CCA to prepare us for the hearing. Some of you may have seen that hearing posted on social media. I had no idea at the time what an impact our story would have.

It really must have opened their eyes because out of that hearing came an aid package for producers affected by the TB investigation and a lot of light shed on how the CFIA was handling the investigation up until this point.

Over the next while we saw the rest of our herd hauled away. The cows that tested negative went to Cargill to go into the food chain, and “the reactors to the TB test” went to have detailed postmortem on them and were rendered. 1200 cows 1200 calves and 53 bulls in all.

The rest of the Jenner community was going through the same thing to some degree. 16 other operations where depopulated because of the co-mingling of our cattle in the community pastures, close to 11 500 in all. Another large group of operations in our community were involved with testing of their herds because of fence line contact with our herd.
By the second week of January all of our cattle were gone, it was a long time coming. It might seem weird to hear me say that, but you can’t start over until they are gone.

The next step in the process was to start the cleaning and disinfecting. In order to get our ranches up and going again, we had to go through a C&D process. Cleaning away all manure, down to dirt and disinfecting all surfaces is the CFIA protocol, after that is achieved, you must have a fallow period of 45 days of sunlight and a mean temperature of 12 degrees Celsius.

We used corral cleaners and bobcats and even shovels to get down to the dirt. When it came to the disinfection, we used high pressure washers and very hot steam to clean and disinfect the wood and steel. The big oil steamer trucks used in the oil patch worked well for this.

Our Cow herd at the time was managed in three separate herds. It was the herd that was managed at my parent’s place, and only that herd that TB positive cows were found in. Because of this we chose to completely destroy all of the wooden corrals on the place, clean down to the dirt and totally rebuild.

We thought that if there was any possibility that we had TB bacteria lurking, we weren’t going to take any chances of missing it. All the cleaning and disinfection of our facilities was complete by the end of April. So now all that was left was to wait for 45 days of dry, sunny, hot weather. Well we had the perfect year for that!

The rebuild

By January it felt like it was time to start thinking about the rebuild. I began to search for the start of our new herd. Because of past dealings, I knew quite a few people to start sourcing the kind of cattle we needed to start over with.
Because we didn't have a place at home to put these new cows I sourced a couple of places that would winter and calve out these new cows. We had pastures that weren't affected by the quarantine, and when the cows were calved out in the spring, they came home and went straight to pasture.

We also bought cow calf pairs in the spring and put them straight out to grass. We topped off by purchasing yearling heifers to breed.

It was an unusual spring and summer getting used to all the new cattle and them getting used to their new home. We set up portable corrals to process and brand the cows and then the calves later on. By the second week of July the cleaning and disinfecting fallow period for the rest of our corrals and pastures was complete.

The fall was complicated too. Because we are required to TB test the new cows annually for the next two years, we had to juggle a lot around. This fall was like starting over and relearning a routine.

As I look back, it was quite a trying experience, not for the faint at heart. There was some awfully dark days off the start. I literally thought that I had single-handedly brought the cattle industry down to her knees.

But... there was only one thing to do, and that was to fight for our livelihoods. I decided early on to put my head down and get to work. TB would become my full-time job for the next while. Like I said earlier, I was told on many occasions this would destroy us and leave us for dead financially and I was not going to let that happen.

With help from ABP, CCA, provincial and federal governments, and our agricultural community we made it through.

There are many important and interesting points that my story never touched on,
Where did this TB Come from? I have no clue and neither does anyone from the CFIA. If they do, they aren't saying. Like I said earlier, it is a similar strain to the strain first identified in central Mexico in 1997 is what I have been told. Never seen in cattle or wildlife in Canada and never seen in wildlife in the United States.

As many of you know we have a large elk herd in our country that was transplanted there in the early 1990s and proceeded to expand to over 8000 head. Our first reaction was to blame the elk.

Disease has been a concern in that growing elk herd for years. In fact I was just reading an article from back in the summer of 2016 where I was quoted saying that if we don't get the elk herd under control we will end up with TB or brucellosis like the buffalo in Wood Buffalo Park.

But if this strain of TB is different than the previous cases of TB in Canada, and if it has never been seen in wildlife in the US, then the elk are an unlikely culprit.

The other point is if there were only 6 positive cases in the hundreds and hundreds of cows that had nose-to-nose contact with these infected cows, then it seems very unlikely that it was contracted from the elk that surround us. They call TB a very contagious disease but it seems to me that it must take continuous exposure over a long period to contract the disease.

Another thing I want to cover is the rumor that we had Mexican roping cattle that were imported into Canada. Well that's not true. Nor is the rumor that I brought it back in horses that I had down south. That's not the case either. I've never taken a horse south of the Canadian border in my life, or brought one up here. I have been told by the CFIA that we will probably never know where it came from which really bothers me.
Earlier in my story I said that all the animals on our place were ordered to be destroyed, horses, dogs, cats everything. This is what we were told initially. As you can imagine this didn't sit well with anyone. The CFIA did some research and I was told that they went over records from the last 40 years and discovered that in all the cases there were no other cases of horses or other farm pets contracting TB. Because of this, the regulations have been changed to exclude these animals.

Throughout my story I've only referred to the producers in my community. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the other hundreds of producers from across western Canada that were affected through the trace in and trace out investigations of this TB Case. There were definitely lots of hardships because of this TB investigation and I am truly sorry. I understand the struggles you went through.

Well where do we go from here? We keep doing what we are good at, producing the best, highest quality beef in the world. Is the TB gone? I think so. There is no question in my mind. First off from what I have learned about the disease, the hot, dry weather and low stocking rates that we run in our part of the country are not an easy place for TB to thrive. That and the other rigorous cleaning and disinfection processes we have completed on our ranches leave no doubt in my mind that we have put TB behind us.