



# Cattle Producer's Handbook

Animal Health Section

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## Lumpy Jaw and Wooden Tongue in Cattle

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Lumpy jaw in cattle is the common name of two disease conditions that occur in cattle. The condition is characterized either by an infection of the bone of the head, particularly the upper and the lower jaw (lumpy jaw, or actinomycosis), or by infection of the tongue and lymph nodes of the head (wooden tongue, or actino-bacillosis).

Lumpy jaw and wooden tongue occur in cattle throughout the world. The diseases affect all breeds, age, and sex of cattle. Usually only a small percentage of animals are affected at any one time.

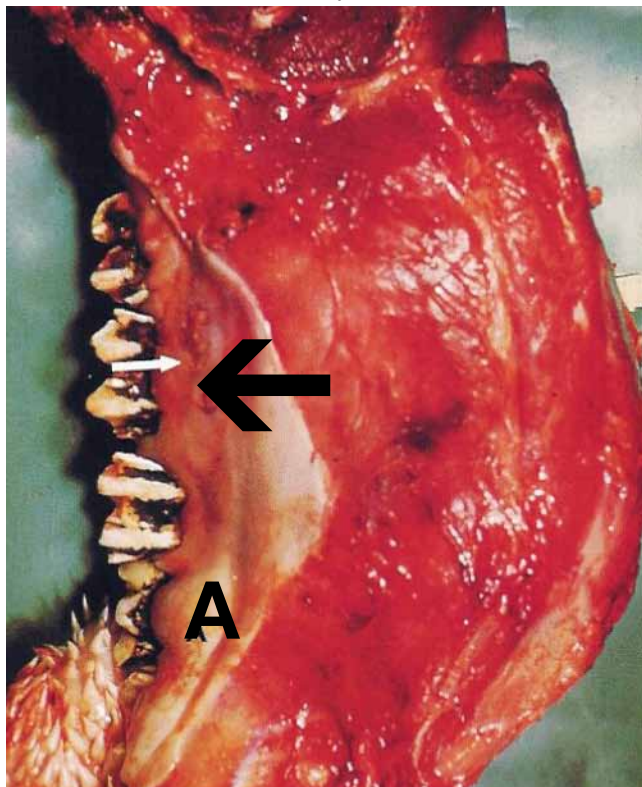


Fig. 1. Actinomycosis of the lower jaw of a cow. The diameter of the mandible is increased. (A) marks a protruding abscesses, and the arrow points to ulcers.

### Cause

Lumpy jaw is caused by infection with the bacterium *Actinomyces bovis*, and wooden tongue by infection with the bacterium *Actinobacillus lignieresii*. Mixed infections have occurred but are not common.

The bacteria, which live in the mouth, invade tissue through breaks in the lining of the mouth cavity. Low quality dry stalky feed, grass seeds, coarse hay, and scrub can cause mouth abrasions that allow entry of infection. These factors are commonly associated with dry times and drought, poor quality hay, or grazing poor quality dry pasture or range.



Fig. 2. Actinobacillosis (wooden tongue) of the tongue of a 2-year-old steer.