

## Don't let Your Guard Down with Vesicular Stomatitis

This summer's outbreak of Vesicular Stomatitis is a slow-moving storm that has left in its wake canceled horse shows, postponed fairs, and dreams of competition spoiled by livestock movement restrictions. By Aug. 7, however, the country's total count of quarantined premises in Texas, New Mexico, Arizona and Colorado, dropped to 143, down from 169 a week earlier, and animal health officials are hoping the eye of the storm has passed.

Although it isn't deadly, Vesicular Stomatitis is painful and infectious. Affected cattle, horses and other susceptible livestock, including pigs, sheep, goats and deer, develop blisters in or around the mouth, tongue, teats and above the hooves. Within a few days, the blisters break, leaving raw, oozing lesions that are so painful, the animals are unable to eat until healing begins, usually within a week or so.

"Sick animals can spread the virus when they drool, or when the fluid from the blisters comes in contact with another animal. There's also concern that biting flies and insects can play a role in transmitting the disease, so it's important also to control insects and keep pens and barns clean and as fly-free as possible," said Dr. Terry Beals, executive director of the Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC), the state's regulatory agency for livestock health.

"To prevent the spread of the virus, it's important to keep infected livestock isolated from the rest of the herd and prevent the movement of any stock that may be in the two- to eight-day incubation phase," he said.

"We don't want to take chances with this disease," said Dr. Beals. "Besides the

suffering infected animals endure, there is some inconvenience and economic impact when pleasure or work horses become ill. Furthermore, when dairy animals lose production or feedlot animals fail to gain, even lose weight, there is significant economic loss. We are continuing to provide diagnostic assistance as we receive reports of blistering, or sores on livestock."

Dr. Beals urged producers to call their area TAHC office, the TAHC Austin headquarters at (512) 719-0700, or the USDA Austin office at (512) 482-5555, if they notice symptoms compatible with Vesicular Stomatitis.

"Arizona animal health officials have released that state's only 10-mile area quarantine on Aug. 7, as there has been no spread of the disease in that state. Two horses on a premise near the small town of Taylor, Ariz., had been infected with the disease earlier this summer, and their sores healed at least 30 days ago," said Dr. Beals.

In New Mexico, there is more good news, as the quarantined premise count dropped to 125 Aug. 7, down from 156 the previous week.

Among the quarantined premises in New Mexico is a

1,000 head dairy near Albuquerque, where one dry cow in the herd has shown symptoms and was diagnosed with the infection through laboratory tests. The producer and New Mexico animal health staff are working to prevent the infection from spreading among the herd, as Vesicular Stomatitis can cause a dramatic drop in milk production among infected cows. During the last Vesicular Stomatitis outbreak in 1982-83, Colorado dairy producers lost about \$253 in production for each infected cow, said Dr. Beals.

"In New Mexico, concerns about the large number of infected premises and the potential spread of infection have prompted animal health and show officials to postpone a number of local and county roping competitions, equine events and other livestock competitions," said Dr. Beals.

Likewise, some events in Colorado have been moved, rescheduled or canceled, as the state copes with 16 quarantines as of Aug. 7, five more than the previous week.

Dr. Beals said that Texas Animal Health Commission staff are working at inspection sites along roads leading into the state, to check health papers and stock. They also are

training and assisting Texas livestock show personnel to check incoming livestock and horses for signs of Vesicular Stomatitis. Part of that training includes reminding personnel to wear rubber gloves when handling potentially infected livestock, as Vesicular Stomatitis can be spread to humans. Symptoms can include a headache, and fever, aches and pains that last about a week, followed by full recovery.

Tough measures, such as active surveillance for the disease, and the large quarantine areas around infected animals, has helped keep "clean" livestock on the move. Most states are continuing to accept livestock from states that are fighting infection, providing the animal has a certificate of veterinary inspection, on which the veterinarian has stated that the animal is not infected or exposed to Vesicular Stomatitis and has not been on or within 10 miles of a quarantined premise within the past 30 days.

Two states, Kentucky and Massachusetts, have chosen to refuse stock from states with infection. South Carolina requires the veterinary statement on the certificate of veterinary inspection to cover the past 60 days; and Idaho and Maryland require permits on stock entering from states with infection.

Canada has instituted movement restrictions, refusing entry to livestock and horses from states with infection, or stock that has been in an infected state within the past 30 days. Likewise, the European Community will not accept horses from infected states, and Chile currently will not accept any susceptible animals from states with infection.

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