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Vesicular Stomatitis Virus (VSV) Confirmed in One Horse in Cochise County, Arizona

PHOENIX, Ariz. - One horse in Arizona has been confirmed with the Indiana strain of Vesicular Stomatitis Virus (VSV). This premise is in Cochise County, Arizona, and has 2 horses and 5 calves present. Only 1 of the 2 horses is currently showing clinical signs of VSV (oral lesions) which were reported to have appeared around April 16th, and there are no clinical signs in the calves which were only recently brought onto the premises. No additional animal movements have occurred. All animals are currently under a quarantine.

Vesicular Stomatitis causes blister-like sores on the mouths, noses and sometimes feet of infected animals. The blisters are most likely to affect the mouth, the tongue and around the nose/muzzle yet can affect the coronary band above the hoof as well. They can be painful causing difficulty in eating and drinking. If cattle are infected, often the hooves and teats are involved leading to severe economic impact in dairy cattle. This also generates worries because the disease is basically indistinguishable from Foot and Mouth Disease in cattle.

"Vesicular Stomatitis Virus mainly affects equine and to a lesser extent cattle and swine," said State Veterinarian Dr. Peter Mundschenk. "It can be painful for animals and costly to deal with."

The horses involved have no history of travel. Other livestock located on the premises show no signs of disease. An Arizona Department of Agriculture foreign animal disease diagnostician was sent to investigate after the report from the veterinarian examining the animal. Investigation of the situation is on-going to detect and prevent further spread.

Veterinarians and livestock owners who suspect an animal may have Vesicular Stomatitis or any other vesicular disease should immediately contact the State animal health authorities. Livestock with clinical signs of Vesicular Stomatitis are isolated until they are healed and determined to be of no further threat for disease spread. There are no USDA approved vaccines for Vesicular Stomatitis.

Though very unusual, people can be infected with the virus. In these situations, it is usually among those who handle infected animals (for example while inspecting a horse's mouth and the horse coughs in the person's face thereby delivering a large dose of virus onto the person's eyes and lips). Vesicular Stomatitis Virus can cause flu-like symptoms and only rarely includes lesions or blisters in people.

Known competent vectors for transmission of VSV include black flies, sand flies, and biting midges (*Culicoides spp.*). The epidemiological investigation on the VSV-positive premises indicates that incursion of VSV-infected insect vectors is the likely source of infection on this premises. Biosecurity measures and vector mitigation have been instituted to reduce the within-herd spread of the virus. The animals are being monitored and the premises will remain under state quarantine until 14 days from the onset of lesions in the last affected animal on the premises.

New Mexico has identified 7 confirmed positive premises in 3 counties (Dona Ana, Eddy, and Sierra Counties). Since the start of the outbreak on April 13th, a total of 8 VSV-positive premises have been confirmed in 2 states, New Mexico and Arizona. More information about Vesicular Stomatitis is available online. If you suspect VSV in your animals please contact your veterinarian or report to diseasereporting@azda.gov.