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Vesicular Stomatitis Virus Now Present in 10 Counties in Kansas

MANHATTAN, Kansas — The Kansas Department of Agriculture has announced that vesicular stomatitis virus (VSV) has now been confirmed in 10 counties in Kansas. KDA's Division of Animal Health continues to respond to the outbreak that began in south central Kansas in mid-June and has now expanded its reach to the north and east. More than 60 premises have tested positive for VSV in Butler, Chase, Cowley, Greenwood, Marion, Miami, Montgomery, Morris, Sedgwick and Sumner counties. In addition, KDA is awaiting laboratory results from symptomatic animals in other counties as the outbreak continues to spread.

All premises with confirmed cases of VSV in horses have been quarantined; in addition, any premises with animals showing clinical signs consistent with VSV are placed on quarantine. Nearly 50 premises are currently under quarantine. A quarantine for VSV lasts for at least 14 days from the onset of symptoms on the last animal on the premises. Quarantines are not lifted until a veterinarian has examined all susceptible animals on the premises. Over 70 premises have been released from quarantine.

VSV is a viral disease which primarily affects horses, but can also affect cattle, sheep, goats, swine, llamas and alpacas. At this time, the vast majority of confirmed cases of VSV in Kansas have been horses, although some cattle have also been diagnosed. KDA has advised the beef industry to be vigilant in monitoring their cattle for symptoms.

“As this VSV outbreak continues, we ask all owners of horses and other livestock to monitor your animals for symptoms of VSV, and be in communication with your veterinarian if you see anything of concern,” Dr. Justin Smith, Animal Health Commissioner said. “You can help slow the spread of this virus by taking aggressive steps to limit exposure to insects that are the primary source of infection and by keeping your horses separate from other horses which may be infected.”

In horses, VSV is typically characterized by lesions which appear as crusting scabs on the muzzle, lips, ears, coronary bands, or ventral abdomen. Other clinical signs of the disease include fever and the formation of blister-like lesions in the mouth and on the dental pad, tongue, lips, nostrils, ears, hooves and teats. Infected animals may refuse to eat and drink, which can lead to weight loss. Vesicular stomatitis can be painful for infected animals and costly to their owners. Although it is rare, humans can also become infected with the disease when handling affected animals and can develop flu-like symptoms.

The primary way the virus is transmitted is from biting insects like black flies, sand flies and midges. Owners should institute robust measures to reduce flies and other insects where animals are housed. VSV can also be spread by nose-to-nose contact between animals. The virus itself usually runs its course in five to seven days, and it can take up to an additional seven days for the infected animal to recover from the symptoms. There are no approved vaccines for VSV.

KDA has developed guidelines to assist organizations which are hosting shows and fairs across the state, and have worked with many of them to consider how they can protect the health and safety of animals attending their events.

VSV has also been confirmed in Arizona, Missouri, Nebraska, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas. Because of the confirmed cases in Kansas, other states and Canada are likely to increase restrictions on livestock imports. Animal health officials strongly encourage all livestock owners and veterinarians to call the animal health authority in the destination location for the most current import requirements prior to travel.

Information about VSV can be found on the KDA website at www.agriculture.ks.gov/VSV, including:

- Documents describing symptoms of VSV
- Recommendations for fly control practices
- Guidelines for shows and fairs
- Materials from a webinar with K-State Research and Extension in Butler County
- Current state and national situation reports

VSV is considered a reportable disease in Kansas. If you observe clinical signs among your animals, contact your veterinarian right away. For questions about VSV in Kansas, please contact the KDA Division of Animal Health at 785-564-6601.

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