FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Vesicular Stomatitis Detected in Five Horses in Kinney County
First Case in the US This Year

AUSTIN - Vesicular stomatitis (VS) has been detected in five horses in far Southwest Texas, (in Kinney County, southeast of Del Rio, TX). The U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) confirmed the viral infection of the five horses. The horses were tested after the owner observed blistering and swelling on the animals' muzzles and contacted their veterinary practitioner. Testing at the National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) confirmed the virus as the New Jersey serotype.

VS can cause blisters and sores in the mouth and on the tongue, muzzle, teats or hooves of horses, cattle, swine, sheep, goats, llamas and a number of other animals. Lesions usually will heal in two or three weeks. Because of the contagious nature of VS and its resemblance to other diseases such as foot and mouth disease (FMD), animal health officials urge livestock owners and caretakers to report these symptoms to their veterinarian immediately. Most animals recover well with supportive care by a veterinarian, but some lesions can be painful.

The newly identified infected group of horses is currently under quarantine by the TAHC. Affected and exposed horses will be monitored by regulatory veterinarians until all lesions have healed and a decision is made to release the quarantine (a minimum of 21 days). There is no known exposure to other horses around the state, or at any equine events. No other cases of VS have been identified in the immediate area or elsewhere in the state.

Dr. Dee Ellis, Texas' State Veterinarian and TAHC Executive Director, said "Livestock owners should use the best means possible to limit exposure of their livestock to insect bites". It is thought that insects are an important vector in the transmission of VS. Sand flies and black flies likely play a role in the virus transmission, so controlling insects is important. "VS outbreaks are extremely sporadic and years may lapse between cases. The last confirmed case of VS in Texas was in 2009," Dr. Ellis stated.

Some states and other countries may restrict movement of, or impose additional requirements for susceptible animals from states having known cases of VS, therefore contact the state or country of origin for their requirements prior to moving livestock.

"If you suspect your animal may have VS, you should notify your veterinarian immediately," said Dr. Andy Schwartz, Assistant Executive Director and State Epidemiologist. "VS is not highly contagious to people but it can cause flu-like illness if infected saliva gets into an open wound, eyes or mouth. People handling potentially infected animals should wear gloves for protection, and talk with their physician if they have questions," Dr. Schwartz stated.

For more information about VS visit
http://www.tahc.state.tx.us/news/brochures/TAHCBrochure_VS.pdf .

A USDA APHIS-VS fact sheet about Vesicular Stomatitis is available at
http://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/content/printable_version/fs_vesicular_stomatitis_2012.pdf

Founded in 1893, the Texas Animal Health Commission works to protect the health of all Texas livestock, including: cattle, swine, poultry, sheep, goats, equine animals, and exotic livestock.

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