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PRESS RELEASE

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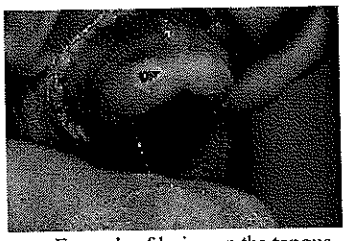

Example of lesion on the tongue from Vesicular Stomatitis

Vesicular Stomatitis Virus Found In Horses in Arizona

(Phoenix, AZ) -- The Arizona Department of Agriculture has confirmed Vesicular Stomatitis Virus in horses on a premises in Cochise County. The case-positive premises where VSV was discovered has been quarantined. This disease causes blister-like lesions to form in the mouth and on the dental pad, tongue, lips, nostrils, hooves, and teats. These blisters swell and break, leaving raw tissue that is so painful that infected animals generally refuse to eat or drink and show signs of lameness. Severe weight loss usually follows, and in dairy cows, a severe drop in milk production commonly occurs. Affected dairy cattle can appear to be normal and will continue to eat about half of their feed intake.

Why is this important?
While vesicular stomatitis can cause economic losses to livestock producers, it is a particularly significant disease because its outward signs are similar to (although generally less severe than) those of foot-and-mouth disease, a foreign animal disease of cloven-hoofed animals that was eradicated from the United States in 1929. The clinical signs of vesicular stomatitis are also similar to those of swine vesicular disease, another foreign animal disease. The only way to tell these diseases apart is through laboratory tests.

Can humans "get it"?
Humans can also become infected with vesicular stomatitis when handling affected animals. However, we have no human cases to report.

Which animals are most susceptible?
Horses, swine and cattle are most at risk. However, other animals may also contract the disease.

Has this disease been found in the U.S. before?
Last year Texas and New Mexico had a few cases of VSV. This year Arizona is the first state to detect the disease, which occurs sporadically on 5 to 8 year cycles.

Why is this occurring now?
Vesicular stomatitis is most likely to occur during warm months in the Southwest, particularly along riverways and in valleys. Arizona last had confirmed cases of VSV in the spring of 2005.

How is this disease handled?
The following actions have been recommended to the owners of the horses:

• Separate animals with lesions from healthy animals, preferably by stabling. Animals on pastures apparently are affected more frequently with this disease.
• As a precautionary measure, do not move animals from premises affected by vesicular stomatitis for at least 30 days after the last lesion found has healed.
• Implement on-farm insect control programs that include the elimination or reduction of insect breeding areas and the use of insecticide sprays or insecticide-treated eartags on animals.
• Use protective measures when handling affected animals to avoid human exposure to this disease.

What if a viewer/reader suspects they have animal(s) with this problem?
They should immediately contact their veterinarian or the State Veterinarian's office at 602-542-4293.

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