



Vesicular Stomatitis

The Educated Horseman: Disease Series



Ten horses in southwest Texas were diagnosed with vesicular stomatitis in 2014. Farms in Kinney, Hidalgo, Nueces and San Patricio counties are under quarantine by the Texas Animal Health Commission.

Because of the increasing number of confirmed cases of vesicular stomatitis, animal health officials with the Louisiana Department of Agriculture and Forestry are requiring additional documentation on horses entering Louisiana from any state with confirmed cases of vesicular stomatitis. Any livestock (equine, bovine, porcine, caprine or ovine) entering Louisiana from a county where vesicular stomatitis has been diagnosed within the past 30 days must be accompanied with a health certificate written within 10 days of entry. That health certificate must contain this statement: "All animals identified on this certificate have been examined and found free from signs of vesicular stomatitis, have not been exposed to vesicular stomatitis and have not originated from a premises that is under quarantine for vesicular stomatitis."

Vesicular stomatitis is a viral disease that afflicts livestock, wildlife and humans. The incubation period is two to eight days. Development of a fever typically follows that incubation period. In livestock, this virus causes blisterlike lesions on the tongue, mouth, nose and lips. Crusting lesions also have been seen on the muzzle, coronary bands, the udder or sheath. Because the disease

typically resolves itself in 10 to 14 days, secondary symptoms such as loss of appetite due to oral lesions and lameness due to foot lesions normally are short-lived. In humans, vesicular stomatitis may last three to five days and cause headaches, fever, muscle pains and weakness. In very rare occasions, humans also can develop lesions on the mouth, lips and nose.

There is no specific treatment required. Disinfecting lesions with mild antiseptics is recommended to prevent secondary bacterial infections. If an infection occurs around the sores, treatment with antibiotics may be required. Anti-inflammatory medications also may be used to reduce swelling and pain and ensure horses continue to eat and drink.

The exact method of transmission of vesicular stomatitis is not clearly understood. The virus can be spread through direct contact with infected animals or fomites or by blood-feeding insects. Vesicular stomatitis is specifically transmitted through black flies and sand flies. Exposure to insects that carry the virus often is associated with nearby moving water sources such as creeks, rivers and pasture irrigation.

These biosecurity guidelines can help prevent the occurrence of vesicular stomatitis on your farm.

- Isolate new horses for a minimum of 21 days before introducing them into your herd.
- Create an insect control program. Keep horses pastured away from moving water.
- Use individual feeders and equipment.
- Regularly clean feeders, waterers, horse trailers and other farm equipment with which horses have contact.
- Handle healthy horses first and affected horses last. Handlers should then shower, change clothing and disinfect all equipment to prevent exposing other horses to the virus.
- Handlers should prevent direct contact with the infected horse's saliva or blister fluids.



While vesicular stomatitis rarely is fatal, it is a reportable disease and in a suspected case, state and federal animal health authorities must be contacted. Once diagnosis of vesicular stomatitis is confirmed, the affected

farm(s) will be placed under quarantine for a minimum of 30 days. If you suspect your horse has been exposed to or may have vesicular stomatitis, contact your veterinarian immediately.

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References

LDAF Animal Health Advisory- Vesicular Stomatitis. June 24, 2014.
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