



NEWS RELEASE

Texas Animal Health Commission

"Serving Texas Animal Agriculture Since 1893"

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Anthrax is Here --- Vaccinate Livestock Now

AUSTIN - Late summertime in certain parts of Texas means livestock producers should be on the lookout for the resurfacing of anthrax in their animals. Among the anthrax cases confirmed this summer are one bovine in Crockett County, one whitetail deer in Kinney County and one whitetail deer in Uvalde County. Anthrax which is caused by *Bacillus anthracis* is a naturally occurring disease with worldwide distribution, including Texas.

"Anthrax cases are not unusual; especially at this time of year. This is peak season for anthrax to resurface and affect livestock and deer," Dr. Dee Ellis, Texas Animal Health Commission (TAHC) Executive Director and State Veterinarian, said. "Ranchers and livestock owners should be aware of recent anthrax confirmations in their area and consider vaccinating their livestock to protect against the disease."

Anthrax can occur anywhere, but in Texas, cases most often are confined to a triangular area bounded by the towns of Uvalde, Ozona and Eagle Pass. This area includes portions of Crockett, Val Verde, Sutton, Edwards, Kinney and Maverick counties.

If an animal dies from the disease and isn't properly disposed of by burning, the bacteria can spill out into the soil and remain dormant for long periods of time. The anthrax bacteria resurfaces on grass or forage under ideal weather and soil conditions during spring and summer months. By the time an animal shows signs of staggering, trembling or convulsions after ingesting the anthrax bacteria, death is expected. TAHC regulations require that the animal carcasses, manure and bedding be incinerated until thoroughly consumed. This practice will keep wild animals from being exposed to the disease and it will also kill the bacteria, preventing another site from being contaminated with anthrax.

Anthrax is a reportable disease in Texas. While laboratory tests, conducted by the Texas Veterinary Medical Diagnostic Laboratory (TVMDL) in College Station, are needed to confirm infection, suspected cases also are to be reported to the TAHC.

"Outbreaks usually end when cool weather arrives and the bacteria becomes dormant. In the meantime, producers in or near historically affected areas should consult with their veterinary practitioner about the disease in general, and especially the need to vaccinate. TAHC veterinarians are also available to answer any questions." Dr. Ellis said.

The following are general biosecurity tips that can be helpful to livestock producers who suspect they have an anthrax affected animal or carcass:

- Wear long sleeves and gloves when handling carcasses or when working with or vaccinating livestock to avoid contaminating any sores or scratches on arms or hands. See your doctor if you develop an unusual-looking sore on your hands, arms or other exposed skin. Although it is very rare to contract skin anthrax, this infection requires treatment with antibiotics prescribed by a physician.
- Practice good sanitation. Wash your hands after handling livestock (even if you wear gloves.) Disinfect equipment used on the animals or carcasses. Keep pets and children away from carcasses or bones of dead animals. Move healthy animals away from a pasture where animals have died from the disease.
- Properly dispose of animal carcasses by burning to prevent exposure to other animals, such as predators or dogs.
- Vaccinate livestock if cases occur in the surrounding areas. Anthrax vaccine is a “live” vaccine, so it must not be administered with antibiotics. Vaccinated animals must be withheld from slaughter for two months.
- Restrict the movement of livestock onto or from an affected premise until animals can develop immunity through vaccination (about 10 days).

For more information regarding anthrax, visit <http://www.tahc.state.tx.us> or call 1-800-550-8242.

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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