

Vesicular Stomatitis

Guidance for Positive and Suspect Premises

Vesicular Stomatitis (VS) is a viral disease that usually affects equines and cattle, but can also affect sheep, goats, pigs, llamas, and alpacas. This disease is common in South and Central America, but occasional outbreaks are seen in North America. In May 2023, an outbreak of the New Jersey strain of VS began in California. Cases have also been diagnosed in Texas and Nevada.

Testing

Animals are tested for VS by drawing blood and swabbing the sores or scabs. The blood samples test for antibodies to the disease, and the swabs are used to detect the virus. In cattle, sheep, goats, and pigs, the disease can look just like Foot and Mouth Disease, so additional samples like oral fluid are taken to rule this out. Samples are sent to either the Utah Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory or USDA's National Veterinary Services Laboratory.

Signs and Treatment

Signs of VS appear 2-8 days after infection and include:

- Blisters, sores, or scabbing on hairless areas such as the mouth, nose, ears, hooves, sheath, and udder
- Fever
- Drooling/frothing at mouth
- Reluctance to eat
- Lameness if lesions develop around the hoof

VS does not usually cause animals to die. There is no specific treatment or cure for VS, but anti-inflammatory medications and fluids may help make your animal more comfortable as it recovers. Ask your veterinarian about treatment options for your animals.

Preventing Spread

VS is spread by biting flies and midges and by contact between infected animals. Infected animals shed the virus from their blisters, so contact with infected animals or shared water, feed, buckets, and other equipment, as well as shoes, clothing, and hands can spread VS. Sunlight, heat, and many common disinfectants will destroy VS virus.

To prevent the spread of VS to other animals on your property:

- Separate infected animals from healthy animals
- Use individual feeders, waterers, and equipment when possible
- Use fly control around barns and stables (see below)
- Handle healthy animals before sick animals
- After handling sick animals, wash and disinfect your hands and boots and wash your clothes.

Fly Control

The key to a successful fly control program is to eliminate breeding sites. Clean barns and corrals once a week to break fly life cycles. Check for wet areas around the barns where flies may lay eggs.

Insecticides can temporarily reduce fly and midge populations by killing adult flies. Residual sprays should be applied to walls, ceilings, and rafters. Foggers and sprays can provide a quick knock-down. Fly baits work on house flies, but not stable flies, and should be kept out of reach of animals.

Other methods of control include:

- Screening of feed and tack rooms and box stalls
- Fans that blow downward and outward near doors
- Fly traps and sticky paper to monitor fly numbers
- Fly parasites

Human Disease

Human cases of VS are rare, but can happen. VS causes flu-like symptoms in people who come in contact with blisters or saliva, so wear gloves when handling infected horses and wash your hands thoroughly before eating or rubbing your eyes. Signs of VS in people include fever, muscle aches, headaches, and tiredness.

For more information, visit:

ag.utah.gov