WVDA Confirms Theileria in West Virginia

Charleston W.Va. -- The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) has confirmed the presence of *Theileria orientalis* Ikeda genotype in three West Virginia counties. The WVDA is working with the Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine’s diagnostic laboratory at Virginia Tech to determine the extent of the disease across the region and understand its impact on the livestock industry. Additional surveillance samples are being collected throughout West Virginia.

Theileria is a protozoan parasite transmitted to susceptible animals in the saliva of ticks or by direct blood transmission. Clinical signs can include anemia, fever, lethargy, lack of appetite, exercise intolerance and fetus abortion. Multiple species of *Theileria* are found worldwide, but the *Theileria orientalis* genotype Ikeda are known to infect cattle, water buffalo and yaks. Other Theileria species are known to infect livestock such as sheep, goats, deer and camels.

“If Theileria infection is suspected, or livestock losses include signs of anemia, it should be reported to a local veterinarian immediately,” said Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt. “We strongly suggest that folks implement good biosecurity procedures, including standard tick control measures and not sharing farm medical instruments such as OB sleeves. Tattooing and other shared devices should be thoroughly cleaned and sanitized before use on other animals.”

The recently discovered Asian Longhorned Tick is a known carrier of *Theileria*. The WVDA is encouraging cattle producers to reduce tick exposure...
or tick populations on their farms, as there are no approved treatments for *Theileria orientalis* in the United States. This disease represents no known threat to human health.

“A veterinarian specializing in large animals can provide assessments and herd health plans to livestock producers, as well as prescribe preventive measures to decrease livestock diseases and associated losses,” said State Veterinarian Dr. James Maxwell. “Thus far, testing has identified only *Theileria orientalis*. Additional testing will help to determine whether other species and genotypes are present in West Virginia.”

The WVDA, Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine and the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services are collaborating to monitor the disease in the region. As counties are identified positive for the disease, a corresponding map will be shared and subsequently updated. *Theileria orientalis* Ikeda genotype has been found in 28 Virginia counties.

For further information or to report any suspected clinical cases, contact the WVDA Animal Health offices at 304-558-2214.

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*The West Virginia Department of Agriculture protects plant, animal and human health through a variety of scientific, regulatory and consumer protection programs. The Commissioner of Agriculture is one of six statewide elected officials who sits on the Board of Public Works.*