

News Release
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**WVDA VETERINARIAN COMPLETES INTENSIVE FOREIGN ANIMAL DISEASE
TRAINING**

Assistant State Veterinarian Dr. Koren Custer recently completed her training as a Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostician (FADD) at Plum Island, New York. The course is two weeks of 10-to-12-hour days, according to Custer.

"I got to work with several different species and got to see Foot-and-Mouth Disease first-hand, so it was a very good experience," said Dr. Custer, referring to the extremely contagious disease that caused the destruction of an estimated 7 million cattle and sheep in Great Britain in 2001.

"This is critical information for our veterinarians to have," said Commissioner of Agriculture Walt Helmick. "It's an extra measure of security for our livestock farmers to have animal health professionals with the highest levels of specialized training."

The school runs six times per year and educates approximately 30 students per session. Students are typically federal and state veterinarians and laboratory diagnostic staff, military veterinarians, veterinary school faculty and some industry veterinarians, according to information from the Plum Island website.

These hands-on courses allow students to directly observe signs of foreign animal diseases. Students are also instructed on sample collection and submission in the event of a suspected foreign animal disease outbreak. Once they finish their courses, they, in effect, become surveyors for foreign animal diseases across the United States.

Scientists at the facility have the capability to diagnose more than 30 exotic animal diseases, including FMD, classical swine fever, African swine fever, and other diseases listed by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), and they perform thousands of diagnostic tests each year, looking for the presence of foreign animal disease agents.

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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, as mandated by state law. The Commissioner of Agriculture is one of six statewide elected officials in West Virginia. For more information, visit www.wvagriculture.org.