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First Detection of Longhorned Tick in West Virginia

Charleston, WV - On Monday May 21st, the National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) confirmed *Haemaphysalis longicornis* (longhorned) tick's presence in West Virginia. Ticks samples were collected from cattle on two separate premises in Hardy County. These farms are located on the border with Virginia, approximately 100 miles from Albemarle County, VA. The tick's presence was confirmed in Virginia last week by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services.

"We want people to understand we now have confirmation this tick is in West Virginia. Livestock producers and the public should take extra precautions," said Commissioner of Agriculture Kent Leonhardt. "We will be working with veterinarians throughout the state on how to handle outbreaks."

In November of 2017, the United State Department of Agriculture (USDA), Animal and Plant Inspection Services (APHIS) first identified the longhorned tick in New Jersey. This was the first confirmed presence within the United States. West Virginia is the third state in which APHIS has identified the tick, indicating the distribution is much broader than originally thought. APHIS is not aware of any direct links between West Virginia and Virginia or New Jersey.

"Livestock producers, animal owners and veterinarians should notify the State Veterinarian's office if they notice any unusual ticks, or ticks that occur in large numbers on an individual animal," said State Veterinarian Dr. James Maxwell. "Livestock producers can work with their veterinarians to develop a tick prevention and control program."

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The longhorned tick is non-native species to the United States. The USDA considers the tick as a serious threat to livestock. Heavy tick infestations may cause stunted growth, decreased production and animal deaths. This tick species is known to carry several diseases prone to affect livestock and humans alike, some of which are not prevalent in the United States.

“This tick has been associated with bacterial and viral tickborne disease in other parts of the world,” said Miguella Mark-Carew, Director of Epidemiology and Prevention Services for the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, Bureau for Public Health. “Like deer ticks that transmit Lyme disease, longhorned ticks are very small and can be difficult to find on people and animals. It is important to conduct full-body tick checks when returning from time outdoors in wooded areas.”

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture (WVDA) is working with the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR), West Virginia Department of Natural Resources and the USDA-APHIS to increase outreach activities, educate veterinary practitioners and encourage tick submissions through the Veterinary Tick Submission Project (WVVTSP), a voluntary sentinel tick surveillance system. Any ticks identified through the WVVTSP will be tested for tickborne disease pathogens.

For questions regarding animals, please contact the WVDA’s Animal Health Division at (304) 558-2214.

For questions about tickborne diseases, please call DHHR’s Division of Infectious Disease Epidemiology at (304) 558-5358, extension 1, or visit <http://dhhr.wv.gov/oeps/disease/Zoonosis/Tick/Pages/default.aspx>.

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.

