

News Column

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BIOSECURITY

While not always the best at applying what they know, livestock producers have known for decades that good biosecurity is essential to maintaining good herd health. Swine producers probably do the best job of applying biosecurity practices – isolating any new animals coming into the herd, cleaning equipment and trailers, and limiting visitors to their farms.

“Learning by Doing” has long been a slogan used to describe how 4-Hers learn through their 4-H project work. Unfortunately, I applied that concept where I shouldn’t have and learned a little more about biosecurity than I wanted to several years back.

It was about 18 years ago when I violated good biosecurity practices by going home after a 4-H lamb weigh-in and tagging event, and did my chores before going inside to clean up and change clothes. About two weeks later all of my lambs broke with soremouth.

Once you get soremouth in a flock, you will probably have it every year. Since this is a 4-H project and we take animals to shows, it’s pretty likely that we would have eventually contracted soremouth anyway. Nevertheless, it was still a dumb move to do chores without first showering and putting on clean clothes and shoes.

We received notice late last week that the vesicular stomatitis virus (VSV) has been confirmed in Riley County. VSV was detected in southeast Kansas about three weeks ago and has now been confirmed in over 20 Kansas counties.

VSV is a viral disease that primarily affects horses, but can also affect cattle, sheep,

goats, swine, llamas and alpacas. At this time, the vast majority of confirmed cases of VSV in Kansas have been in horses, although some cattle have also been diagnosed. The Riley County case is a horse.

In horses, VSV is typically characterized by lesions which appear as crusting scabs on the muzzle, lips, ears, coronary bands, or ventral abdomen. The coronary bands are located right above the hooves, and the ventral abdomen would be the belly area, toward the front of the horse.

Not being a horse guy or a veterinarian, I didn't know what a coronary band was and I also had to use Google to tell me that ventral was toward the front,...and dorsal would be toward the rear.

Other signs of the disease include fever and the formation of blister-like lesions in the mouth and on the dental pad, tongue, lips, nostrils, ears, hooves and teats. Infected animals may refuse to eat and drink, which can lead to weight loss.

VSV is primarily transmitted by biting insects like black flies, sand flies and midges. It can also be spread by nose-to-nose contact between animals, but those biting insects are how it reaches otherwise isolated animals.

VSV usually runs its course in five to seven days, and it can take up to an additional seven days for the infected animal to recover from the symptoms. There are no approved vaccines for VSV, so good biosecurity and a solid fly control program are the best prevention methods.

Good biosecurity practices would include isolation of animals when returning from livestock events (or not going to those events at all), minimizing visitors, cleaning and disinfecting equipment, and always changing clothes and shoes after being around other animals.

For preventing the spread of VSV, a good fly control program is a top priority.

If you have questions, you can reach me at the Riley County Extension Office at 785/537-6350. Or, you can send e-mail to gmcclure@ksu.edu.

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