

Horse Disease Hits Mexico and Texas; Not Expected Locally

The USDA has declared a threatening the nation's horse national emergency that is industry following a outbreak

of a disease in Mexico and Texas.

But local sources indicate the disease does not affect Pennsylvania at this time and likely will not reach this area.

To help seal off spread of the disease, transportation of horses from five states, New Mexico, Louisiana, Texas, Oklahoma and Arkansas has been banned. Abe Diffenbach, New Holland Stables sales manager, said the four states around Texas have not actually encountered the disease but are being used as a buffer zone from Texas.

Diffenbach said only one load of horses from Iowa has been turned away from the New Holland Horse auction as result of the disease scare. This was a load which had no temperature chart and Diffenbach indicated he expects the animals back with this situation corrected soon.

Diffenbach also noted that there was a similar scare involving the Eastern-Western sleeping sickness disease about four years ago. The same vaccine used then is being used now to fight the current outbreak but Diffenbach indicated he doesn't think the vaccine is as effective as before.

Meanwhile, the USDA report-

ed last week that more than 152,000 horses have already been vaccinated in Texas and that sufficient vaccine is being supplied to Texas to meet the emergency. The USDA also indicated the vaccine will be made available in areas outside Texas, if deemed necessary.

USDA's Agricultural Research Service has assigned veterinarians in states adjoining Texas to assist in providing surveillance for the disease in outlying areas.

The disease is reported being spread by insects, particularly mosquitoes, and the U.S. Air Force is applying the insecticide Malathion for control of mosquitoes. While the rapid spread of the disease has made it difficult to keep up with accurate figures on the toll, USDA reported last week that 800 horses are already dead in Texas, with more than 1,000 others possibly infected.

The entire state of Texas is under federal quarantine, which requires that all horses intended to be moved from the state must be accompanied by a health and vaccination certificate showing that each individually identified animal has been vaccinated at least 14 days before its movement from the

state.

The USDA said last week that one of the difficulties in the control of the disease is the uncertainty regarding the vaccine. Sufficient laboratory studies have not been completed to determine whether the vaccine can spread the disease and whether or not the vaccine itself can cause illness in the horse. For these reasons the federal government has been cautious in committing the use of the vaccine in areas where the disease has not been known to exist, it was explained.

In declaring an emergency in connection with the disease, Clifford Hardin, U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, authorized "the transfer from other appropriations or funds available to the agencies and corporations of the Department such sums as may be necessary for all proper purposes . . . to control and eradicate the disease wherever found."

The disease itself is known as Venezuelan equine encephalomyelitis (VEE).

Maryland State Veterinarian Dr. T. A. Ladson said the Venezuelan disease may be transmitted directly among both humans and horses and for this reason is difficult to control. He described it as a greater hazard to the horse industry than the past Eastern and Western varieties of the disease.

He also said that early diagnosis is important and he urged anyone having any knowledge of a sickness similar to sleeping sickness in horses to contact an animal health office or veterinarian immediately.

He said horse owners should keep a close eye on their animals, especially from now through November, and report any suspected illness quickly.

Elsewhere Garrett Redmond, vice president of Fireman's Fund American Insurance Companies in San Francisco, assured horse owners in the Southwest that if horses die as a result of inoculation of vaccine their insurance policy will pay the loss. "We are taking the position that it is better to use the vaccine, even though its effects on horses is not entirely known, than to do nothing and just let the horses die," he explained.

He said his company is not cancelling any policies. On new and renewal policies in the five quarantined states, coverage for the disease is being excluded, however He said the exclusion does not apply to existing policies and would be lifted on new policies when the epidemic passes.

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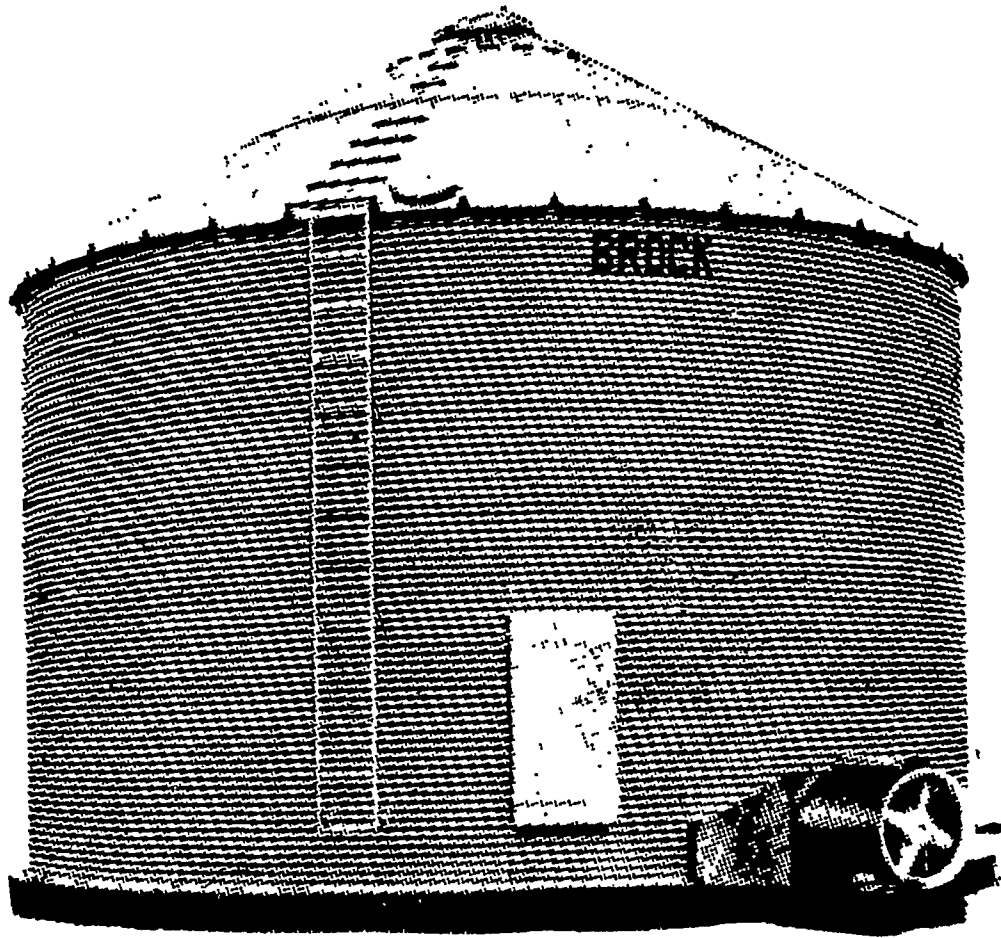
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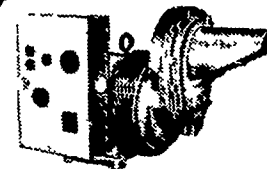


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