

USDA warns of foot-and-mouth look-alike in West

WASHINGTON, D.C. — A widespread outbreak of vesicular stomatitis, a viral disease that causes blister-like lesions in cattle, horses, swine and sheep, is occurring in Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona and Utah, a veterinarian with the U.S. Department of Agriculture said today.

"The virus disease is ordinarily short-lived and not fatal to the sick animal," according to William Buisch, director of emergency field operations for USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

"We are involved because vesicular stomatitis cannot be clinically distinguished from foot-and-mouth disease, a devastating foreign disease that does not exist in the United States," Buisch said. "Therefore, USDA officials are investigating the reported cases to be certain that foot-and-mouth

does not enter the country unrecognized.

"In dairy herds," Buisch said, "the loss of milk production may be a serious economic side-effect of vesicular stomatitis and, in some instances, mastitis may follow. Humans in the epidemic areas and laboratory workers have also become infected in the past."

Since early June, vesicular stomatitis cases have been investigated in cattle and horses on 18 ranches in Arizona, 16 in New Mexico, 9 in Utah and, most recently, 53 ranches in Colorado.

"We're investigating another 40-odd ranches and I expect to see some cases in Wyoming," Buisch said.

The disease generally reoccurs within a region every 10 to 15 years. In 1965, Colorado, Utah, Arizona and New Mexico reported about 250 infected herds. The last

major nationwide outbreak occurred in 1966 in Texas, Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Utah, Mississippi and Arkansas.

Vesicular stomatitis most often in low-lying areas, marshes, swamps and areas with slow-moving streams after periods of

heavy rainfall and high humidity, Buisch said. These are ideal environments for high populations of insects and mosquitoes, which spread the disease. The reservoir for the virus is not known.

There are two distinct strains of vesicular stomatitis — the New Jersey and the Indiana strains. The current outbreak involves the New Jersey strain of the disease.

'Farmers for Ertel'

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After a buffet supper Ertel was introduced by his state coordinator, Jim Goodman. Ertel began his speech raising a glass of milk to toast victory in his campaign for governor. He asked for advice from farmers on agricultural matters and stated his farm program will be announced within a few weeks.

Ertel pointed out that the economy is the most important issue in this campaign, stating that agriculture is the number one industry in Pennsylvania. High interest rates are a problem for farmers due to the condition of today's economy, he said, adding he wants to see farmers' incomes increase so they can make a good living from farming.

Along with the economy, unemployment is an important issue, he said. Ertel reported that about 800,000 people are out of work in Pennsylvania, pointing out

that the state led the nation in layoffs. Due to the high unemployment, Pennsylvania is losing its young people, Ertel said, voicing his commitment to keep the young people in the state.

Ertel claimed Governor Thornburgh made many promises during his 1978 campaign which he never kept: such as more jobs and lower utility rates. Instead, Ertel stated, there are fewer jobs, and utility bills went from 10 percent below the national average to 19 percent above within one year.

When asked why Allen Ertel would give up an almost guaranteed re-election to Congress to run for governor of Pennsylvania, Dale Smith, a campaign volunteer worker and friend of Ertel's from high school football days, replied, "Ertel is a take-charge man. In the House of Representatives he is only one of 435. He wants to be in a position where he can make a difference."

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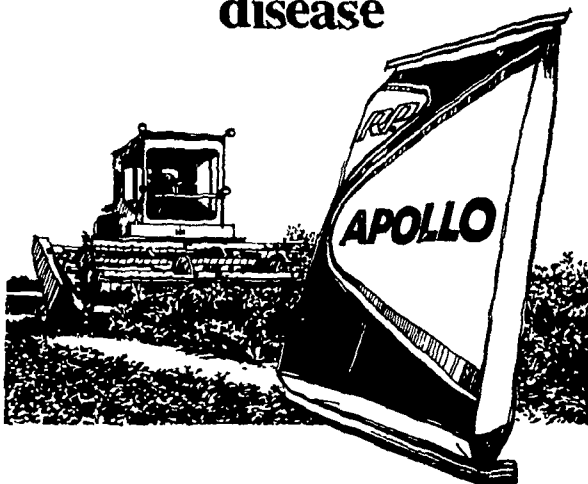
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