

Look for vesicular stomatitis

WASHINGTON, D.C. — When farm animals are infected by vesicular stomatitis, blisters form in their mouths, especially the tongue, and on their lips, noses, teats and feet — like the dreaded foot-and-mouth disease.

Although vesicular stomatitis causes soreness that makes it hard for cattle, sheep, goats, swine and horses to eat or drink, resulting in loss of weight and curtailed milk production in dairy herds, it's not considered a disaster. Sometimes, people get the disease.

U.S. Department of Agriculture veterinarians say the disease usually is short-lived and rarely is fatal. It runs its course in about two weeks and cuts a herd's efficiency for only two or three months.

A bigger problem: Veterinarians say the symptoms of vesicular stomatitis are so much like those of the devastating foot-and-mouth disease that the latter might get a foothold in the United

States if it gets in a herd and is mistaken for the former.

In early June, the first case of vesicular stomatitis since March 18 was diagnosed in Avoca, Neb.

This country is free of foot-and-mouth disease, which is found in other nations and can be distinguished from vesicular stomatitis only by laboratory tests.

Therefore, USDA veterinarians are investigating all new outbreaks of vesicular stomatitis, says Dr. William Buisch of USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, and they're hoping the disease won't be as big a problem this summer and fall as it was during the same period last year.

"From early June last year through May 25 of this year, there were 611 herds in which vesicular stomatitis was diagnosed," said Buisch.

"This disease," he said, "usually is seen only during the summer months. But it continued to be found in new herds throughout the winter.

Some of these new infections could be traced to the movement of infected cattle from one herd to another, but no sources could be found for other cases.

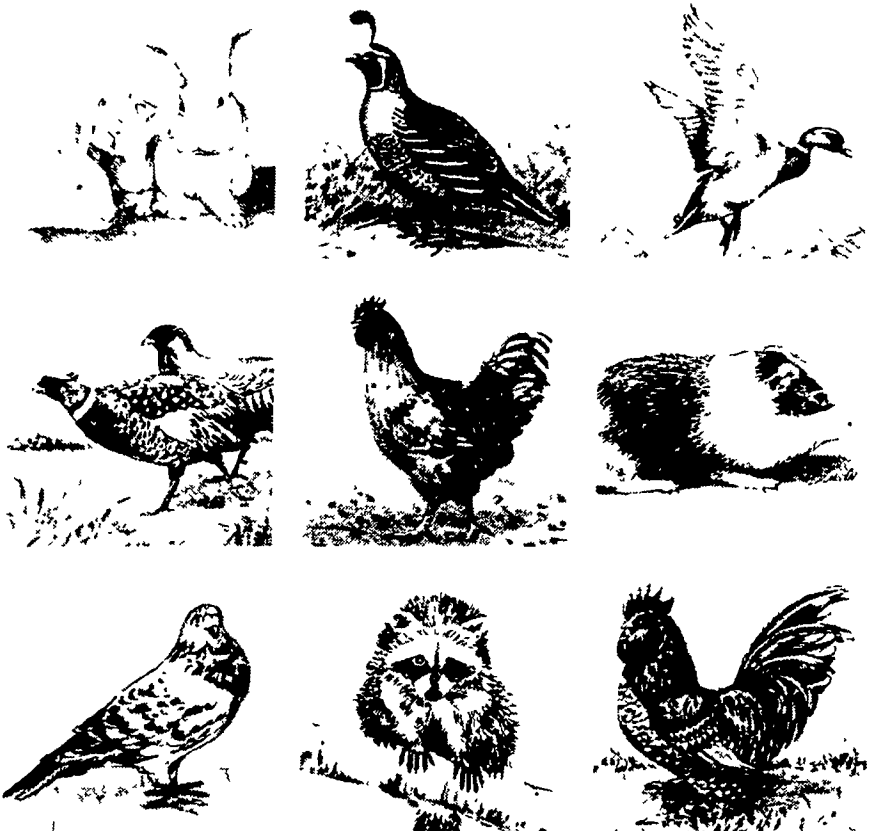
"New cases continue to be found this year, but the number of samples submitted for laboratory tests has fallen off markedly from the large numbers that came in last fall."

Since 1982, the vesicular stomatitis infection has been found in 14 states — Arizona, Colorado, Wyoming, Utah, Idaho, New Mexico, Montana, Nebraska, South Dakota, Washington, California, Missouri, Oregon and Kansas.

"We have investigated suspicious infections in 23 other states," said Buisch. "These proved to be negative to laboratory tests for vesicular stomatitis or foot-and-mouth disease."

Little can be done to speed recovery of animals infected by vesicular stomatitis, said Buisch.

However, he said, anyone seeing signs of any vesicular disease should contact a government veterinarian. A foreign animal disease diagnostician will examine all infected herds and send samples to a laboratory to make sure a food-and-mouth disease invasion does not go undetected.



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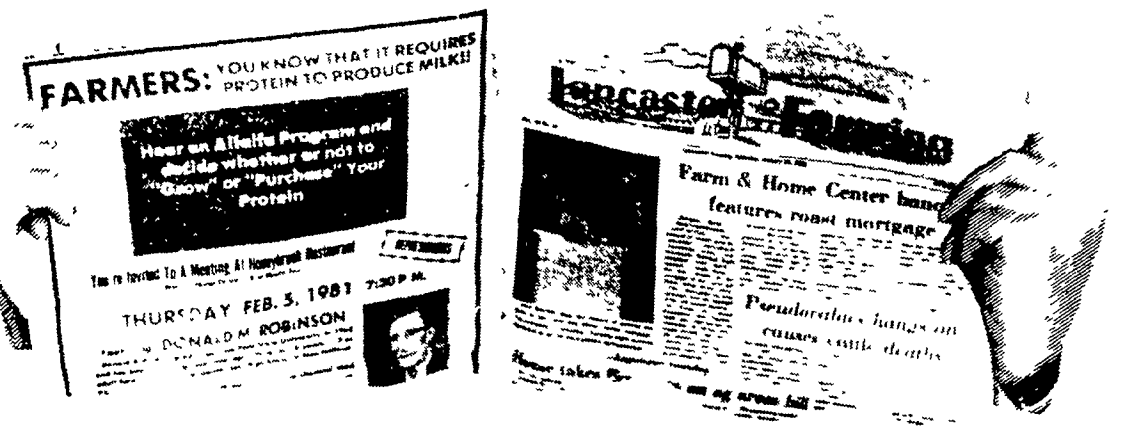


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