

Early Detection Credited For Reducing Potomac Fever Deaths

COLLEGE PARK, Md. — With the June through October season for Potomac horse fever well under way, the number of suspected cases reported so far in Maryland and Virginia is about in line with the past two or three years.

But the number of equine deaths attributable to confirmed cases of the disease is down markedly, says Martin G. Robl, the Potomac horse fever coordinator for Maryland. Dr. Robl is an assistant professor at the College Park campus of the Virginia-Maryland Regional College of Veterinary Medicine.

Through June 30, there had been 35 suspected cases of Potomac horse fever in Maryland and six in Virginia, Robl reported. But there had been no deaths in either state which could be traced to confirmed cases of the disease.

For the entire 1985 season there were 117 cases and eight deaths. Since the disease was first recognized in 1979, there have been 518 cases and 115 deaths among Maryland's horse population.

The disease has been concentrated in Montgomery and Frederick counties in Maryland, and in adjoining Virginia counties along the Potomac river. It was first reported to the animal health world from this area about seven years ago. Hence the name, Potomac horse fever.

Since that time, the disease has been diagnosed in Pennsylvania, Illinois and a number of other states—mostly along rivers and other bodies of water. A portion of the Hudson river valley in New York is another area where the disease recently has been suspected. The exact means by which the disease spreads is still unknown. But suspicions point toward an insect that lives near

water. A major reason for the sharp drop in equine deaths is that veterinarians and horse-owners in the affected areas of Maryland and Virginia have learned to recognize early symptoms of the disease, says Dr. Robl. This permits early treatment of an animal before the infection becomes serious.

Robl advises horse-owners in the affected area to call their local veterinarian as soon as a horse becomes dull and lethargic, and is not eating. Even then, a horse may already be very sick.

A better barometer for early diagnosis is the horse's temperature. Edwin E. Goodwin, Extension horse specialist at the University of Maryland, recommends recording daily temperatures of each horse on a barn chart. He notes that the normal body temperature of a horse should be in a range of 99 to 100.5 degrees F.

Keep in mind that the temperature of a horse can fluctuate in relationship to the weather, Dr. Goodwin commented. He advises taking temperatures at the same time each day, preferably in the morning—before a horse starts its daily workout. Rectal thermometers are the thing to use with horses. Experienced handlers often tie a string on the thermometer to avoid losing it inside the horse.

Call your local veterinarian as soon as you detect a rise of 1.5 to 3 degrees F. above the normal temperature of a particular horse.

In the initial stages of Potomac horse fever, there is a marked decrease in the white blood cell count. Later, the count comes back up. With a salmonella infection,

the white blood count goes up immediately. An accurate blood serum analysis is important in distinguishing between Potomac horse fever and salmonella infection in a horse. Outward symptoms are very similar. But the treatments can differ widely.

Although it has not been proved under laboratory conditions, veterinarians in the field have found that tetracycline seems to be an effective antibiotic in con-

trolling Potomac horse fever. But treating a salmonella infection with tetracycline would be a mistake, since tetracycline kills off the "good" organisms, allowing the salmonella organisms to run rampant in an uninhibited population explosion.

Even though tetracycline has been credited by field veterinarians with greatly reducing the number of deaths from Potomac horse fever,

Maryland's Dr. Martin Robl says that he cannot recommend it officially. He notes that early diagnosis and prompt treatment with electrolyte fluids also can prevent most equine deaths. Tetracyclines could do harm to a horse in cases where an incorrect medical diagnosis has been made. On the other hand, ordinary electrolyte fluids have no potential for harming a horse.

NY Charolais Field Day Set For Tomorrow

HANNIBAL, NY — This year's New York State Charolais Association Field Day will be hosted by Mary and Bob's Farm in Hannibal on Sunday, July 27, at 11:00 a.m. The program has something to offer for all, from the junior members through the seniors. For the early arrivals, there will be tours of the new fencing systems which Rick and Bob have put up this year, followed at 11 a.m. by a presentation on the

system by Eric Scott. The main speaker for the day will be Keith Severson, extension agent for Oswego, Madison, and Onondaga Counties on the topic of "Management of Your Assets to Maximize Their Potential," and he will expand on the topics of intensive grazing and other utilization of your farm's facilities.

Further discussion is also expected on the recent innovative

marketing concept used by Mary and Bob's Farm for sale of Charolais "Lite Beef."

For the young members in attendance, a demonstration on how to prepare a heifer for show is under the direction of Don House of Benton Knolls Farm in Penn Yan.

To get to the Scott's Farm, proceed about one mile west of Hannibal on New York Route 104 to Wiltsieville Road where you turn North for one mile.

York Co. To Hold Snake Roundup

YORK — York County's 26th annual copperhead snake roundup and reptile show is scheduled for Saturday, August 16, 1986, with headquarters at Indian Steps Museum located in Lower Chancelord Township along the Susquehanna River just off Route 425.

Dale Leiphart, vice-president of the sponsoring Conservation Society of York County, said that reptiles from all over the world

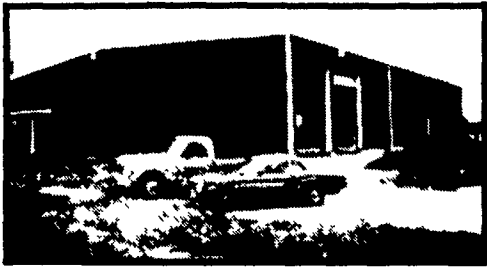
will be on display. In addition to the snake displays, spectators will have the opportunity to observe other sports displays and demonstrations, tour the museum, visit the Harry Allaman Nature Center and hike the nature trail.

The number of copperheads taken in the roundup isn't really important, according to Leiphart. "We are interested in informing

the public about reptiles and their value in the balance of nature. All copperheads captured will be released in the vicinity where captured under the supervision of the Society".

Prizes will be awarded for the largest and most copperheads captured. The hunt starts at 8 a.m. and ends at 4 p.m. All hunters must register to qualify for an award.

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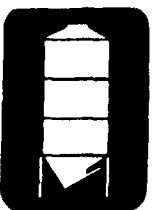
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