

media release

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Contact: Christi Lightcap, (303) 239-4190, Christi.lightcap@ag.state.co.us

Colorado Department of Agriculture Investigates Anthrax Case

LAKEWOOD, Colo. – The Colorado Department of Agriculture is currently investigating an anthrax case in Logan County; one deceased cow is confirmed to have been infected with the disease, approximately 50 dead cattle are suspected to have been exposed. One location has tested positive and adjacent ranchers are being notified. No cattle left the location prior to the quarantine. No cattle entered the food chain.

“The risk is minimal outside the affected ranch. We believe, at this point, that anthrax is confined to that specific premises,” said State Veterinarian, Dr. Keith Roehr. “Colorado has not had an anthrax case in 31 years but anthrax outbreaks are not uncommon in the Western United States. We are dedicated to providing the necessary response to ensure that the investigation works quickly to limit the spread of this disease.”

The premises has been quarantined and people, cattle, and equipment that may have come into contact with anthrax are being monitored during this investigation.

"Our focus is on the potential for human exposure," said Dr. Tony Cappello, district public health administrator for the Northeast Colorado Health Department. "We are currently conducting our own public health investigation and contacting individuals that have been involved with the livestock. Anthrax is not spread from person to person and exposure is limited only to those who had contact with the affected cattle or the immediate area."

Anthrax can develop naturally in soil; the spores can become active in association with periods of marked climatic or ecologic change such as heavy rainfall, flooding or drought which can then expose the anthrax spores to grazing livestock. Outbreaks of anthrax are commonly associated with neutral or alkaline soils. In these areas the spores apparently revert to the vegetative form and multiply to infectious levels so that cattle, horses, mules, sheep and goats may readily become infected when grazing such areas.

Anthrax is a serious disease because it can cause the rapid loss of a large number of animals in a very short time. Often, animals are found dead with no illness detected. Appropriate carcass disposal is being used to prevent further soil contamination.

Producers should consult their veterinarians and vaccinate their livestock, if deemed appropriate.

Humans or animals can become infected by coming in contact with infected animals, soil or water. Anthrax infection can be treated with antibiotics, especially if caught in the early stages.

Frequently Asked Questions:

What is Anthrax?

Anthrax is a serious disease caused by *Bacillus anthracis*, a bacterium that forms spores. There are three forms of anthrax: cutaneous, inhalation, and gastrointestinal.

Is it contagious? Who is susceptible?

Yes, it is contagious to all mammals, including humans. Animals most susceptible include cattle, sheep, horses and goats. Humans or animals can become infected by coming in contact with infected animals, soil or water. If humans become affected 90-95% of the infections are the cutaneous form.

How is it transmitted?

Anthrax is transmitted through direct contact with the bacteria or by ingesting or breathing in the spores.

How is it treated?

Anthrax can be treated with antibiotics, especially if caught in the early stages. There is a vaccine for humans and livestock. People on the quarantined location and adjacent ranches have been contacted.

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