

Sent: Monday, July 08, 2013 4:22 PM

Subject: STATE VETERINARIAN'S OFFICE - Rabid Cow in Weld County

Rabies-positive bull diagnosed in Weld County

Date: July 8th, 2013

On July 6th, 2013, CSU Diagnostic Lab confirmed that a bull from Weld County was rabies-positive.

On July 5th, a veterinarian was called to examine and treat a bull that was down, dehydrated, depressed, and straining in a pasture near Berthoud, Colorado.

The bull initially responded to treatment but still was weak in the hind legs; he later died the same day. The brain of the bull was submitted to CSU Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory in Fort Collins; CSU pathologists subsequently confirmed that the bull was positive for rabies. Local public health authorities are working closely with those involved in the case for appropriate rabies post-exposure prophylaxis.

There has been a significant increase in the incidence of rabies over the last five years in Colorado. This recent case of rabies in a bovine highlights the importance to consider rabies as a possible etiology in all neurological cases. The predominant terrestrial animal which currently acts as a vector for rabies is the skunk but other wildlife species that can carry and transmit the rabies virus are bats, raccoons, and foxes.

Initially, rabid livestock species can exhibit a wide variety of clinical signs, so keep an open mind and communicate with animal owners on possible differential diagnoses. It is also important to use personal protection during the physical exam or necropsy of livestock when rabies is suspected or especially in any situation where neurological clinical signs are evident; in those cases, it would be prudent to protect yourselves as if every case was rabies.

With the current rabies incidence in Colorado, it is vital to inform and recommend that not only dogs and cats be rabies vaccinated but also other animals that could be exposed to wildlife that carry and transmit the rabies virus. This includes horses, small ruminants, llamas, alpacas, petting zoo animals, and possibly other valuable livestock. Many rabies cases that involve livestock result in numerous people having to take post-exposure prophylaxis. Considering the current incidence of wildlife rabies in Colorado, the lethal outcome of the disease, and the cost and liability when people have been exposed to a possibly rabid animal, the benefits of vaccinating animals for rabies certainly outweigh other potential reasons for not vaccinating for rabies.

The American Association of Equine Practitioners (AAEP) has included rabies in their "core vaccination" list and defined a recommended vaccination schedule. A "core vaccination" is defined by the AVMA as those vaccinations "that protect from diseases that are endemic to a region, those with potential public health significance, required by law, virulent/highly infectious, and/or those posing a risk of severe disease."

The Compendium of Animal Rabies Prevention and Control, 2011 recommends that “All horses should be vaccinated against rabies. Livestock, including species for which licensed vaccines are not available, that have frequent contact with humans (e.g., in petting zoos, fairs, and other public exhibitions) should be vaccinated against rabies. Consideration should also be given to vaccinating livestock that are particularly valuable.” The Compendium also has a listing of approved vaccines for the different species and a recommended vaccination schedule, available at <http://www.nasphv.org/Documents/RabiesCompendium.pdf>

For statistics and other epidemiological information on confirmed rabies cases in Colorado please to the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment’s webpage at: www.colorado.gov/cdphe/rabies; it has many excellent rabies resources.