

This column features questions from readers submitted via the website. To submit a question to Small Acre Sam, visit **BarnyardsandBackyards.com**. If your question is featured, you will receive a free one-year subscription to *Barnyards & Backyards!*



# ask Sam

## question

**Dear Sam,**

I have been seeing stories in the news about animals getting vesicular stomatitis. Could my animals be at risk? What about my kids? What symptoms do I look for and how can I minimize these risks? – *Chance, Sheridan*

**Dear Chance,**

Vesicular stomatitis (VS) is a viral disease that mainly affects horses, pigs, and cattle. Occasionally, VS will affect other livestock like goats, llamas, and alpacas. VS is a “zoonotic disease,” meaning humans can also be infected by this disease; however, this is rare. As of September 2015, there have been 22 livestock cases in five counties in Wyoming.

Animals with VS do not typically die, but the symptoms can affect performance and lead to significant economic losses. Because of those

possible losses, VS is internationally recognized as a “reportable disease.” When a disease is reported, international trade can be blocked, interstate movement of animals can be halted, and lengthy quarantines of animals and premises may result. Diseases like VS receive lots of attention.

Outward signs and symptoms are similar to, yet less severe than with another more serious disease known as foot-and-mouth disease (FMD). VS-infected animals will most often show signs of excessive salivation and, upon closer inspection, will show raised, blister-like lesions on the lips, gums, tongue, dental pad, nostrils, coronary band, vulva, and teats. These lesions will swell, pop, and become very painful for the animal, causing reluctance to eat or drink. Difficulty eating and drinking will result in weight loss, decreased milk production, and lameness in production livestock. Pigs can be especially susceptible to lameness due to foot lesions caused by the disease. Horses typically show lesions and crusted scabs on the tongue, lips, corner of the mouth, and gums. In the rare case of human infection, people might experience flu-like symptoms, fever, or achy muscles.

The ways in which VS is spread are not fully known. It is suspected transmission occurs via insects, mechanically, or through saliva or contact with lesions.

Good sanitation and monitoring of animals for infections are highly recommended. If VS or any other infection is suspected, it is a good idea to separate affected animals from healthy animals to contain any further outbreak until a definite diagnosis can be determined. Since insects may be a major vector, insect control programs can help minimize risks. Always remember to wear protective clothing when handling animals with infections. Report any suspicious cases to your veterinarian immediately and don't be afraid to ask questions. A list of veterinary clinics that could provide a diagnosis around the state can be found at <http://www.wyvma.org/>.

– Sam

answer

An advertisement for Wyoming Livestock Roundup. The background features a silhouette of a person riding a horse in a field at sunset. The text reads: "WYOMING LIVESTOCK ROUNDUP", "The Weekly News Source for Wyoming's Ranchers, Farmers and AgriBusiness Community.", and "www.wyln.net". There is a small inset image of the Roundup magazine cover. At the bottom, the address and phone numbers are listed: "P.O. Box 850, Casper, WY 82602, (800) 967-1647 • (307) 234-2700".

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