

USDA TIMELINE FOR CATTLE EXAMINATION AT HOLTON, KS

(Provided by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS))

Tuesday, March 12, 2002

1:30pm (all times are Central Standard Time) Market veterinarian at Holton, KS, reports a possible foreign animal disease (FAD) to Kansas Animal Health Department (KAHD). Market veterinarian reports oral lesions in a consignment of cows. APHIS office in Topeka, KS, is also notified.

1:30pm-5:00pm The cattle are isolated under the continuous supervision of market veterinarian.

5:00pm KAHD arrives at the Holton market and performs a visual inspection of the suspect animals. No outward clinical signs are apparent. The cattle are moved into the chute area for a complete physical examination. Eight of the nine cows that were examined have oral erosions and ulcerations. Their temperatures are also slightly elevated. The cattle have no foot or teat lesions characteristic of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD). Tissue, probang, and blood samples are collected.

8:00pm KAHD veterinarian talks about the results of the animal examination with Kansas Livestock Commissioner. He reports that the lesions were most likely foreign body induced (feed related) and not likely to be FMD. KAHD veterinarian had recently completed the FADD (foreign animal disease diagnostics) course and had spent 30 days in the UK last year. Based on his experience and the practical fact that most of the animals had already left the market before he arrived, KAHD, Kansas Livestock Commissioner, and APHIS decide not to order the market closed.

9:00pm The cattle are held in an isolation pen at the market.

10:00pm KAHD veterinarian arrives at APHIS office and along with APHIS begins to prepare the samples for shipment. During a telephone call that included APHIS, KAHD, and the Kansas Livestock Commissioner, options for delivering the samples to FADDL (Foreign Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory at Plum Island, NY) are discussed. Because it is too late to get the samples to FedEx, the decision is made to hand-deliver the samples to Plum Island the next day. While no one believes this is FMD, there is concern about the number of animals that had moved through the market that day and a desire to not delay the results an additional 24 hours. Arrangements are made to hand-deliver the samples and handle this case as a Priority 1 FAD investigation.

At this time another APHIS Veterinary Medical Officer is called and told to conduct an investigation at the farm-of-origin of the lesioned animals. This investigation is to be conducted the next morning.

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6:30am KAHD veterinarian departs for Plum Island, NY, with the samples.

8:00am Another official from KAHD leaves Kingman to conduct the farm-of-origin investigation.

9:30am APHIS' Kansas office informs APHIS' Western Regional office for Veterinary Services about the investigation. At this time an APHIS official is instructed to notify APHIS officials in Washington,DC.

11:00am State officials leave a message about the situation for Kansas Ag. Secretary Jamie Adams.

11:15am An APHIS official in Kansas receives a call from an individual in Oklahoma (he claimed to be a commodities trader/journalist) asking about an FMD investigation in Holton, KS. This is APHIS' first inkling that this investigation has "leaked" outside our normal regulatory loop. Thinking that this was an anomaly, APHIS officials discuss how to handle additional calls, i.e., tell the truth, namely that this is a routine investigation, USDA conducts hundreds of investigations per year, and we do not believe that we are dealing with FMD.

Around this time, the APHIS Veterinary Services offices are inundated with media calls. Instructions are issued to direct all media calls to APHIS' Legislative and Public Affairs (LPA) office. Calls from practitioners, producer groups, legislators, state and federal agencies, etc. (about 75 calls) come in and are returned by APHIS officials in Kansas that afternoon. An APHIS official in Kansas does talk to two media groups after the initial media call, but has no further media contacts after receiving instructions to refer all media calls to APHIS' LPA office.

11:30am State officials in Kansas implement a portion of Emergency Response plan and inform the Kansas Division of Emergency Management of what is transpiring.

1:00pm KAHD veterinarian arrives at the KAHD office after completing the on-farm investigation. He found additional evidence that the oral lesions were feed related (he observed that the Timothy hay being fed was full of "beards," noted similar lesions in a horse being fed the same hay, and was able to remove "beards" from the lesions). A KAHD veterinarian at this point begins to answer all phone calls to KAHD related to the investigation.

8:15pm APHIS lab at Plum Island reports that the samples are negative for FMD. A later report confirms the presence of feed-related foreign bodies.