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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**CATTLE IN NORTH DAKOTA, TEXAS TEST POSITIVE FOR ANTHRAX;  
NDA ENCOURAGES LIVESTOCK OWNERS TO MONITOR, PROTECT ANIMALS**

LINCOLN – With recent announcements from North Dakota and Texas of cattle testing positive for anthrax, the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) is encouraging livestock owners to protect their animals by watching for this disease and by consulting with veterinarians about the use of vaccines.

Anthrax is a deadly disease caused by a spore-forming bacteria (*Bacillus anthracis*) that can remain alive, but dormant in the soil for years. The anthrax bacteria can contaminate soil and grass after periods of wet, cool weather, followed by hot, dry conditions. Animals can ingest the bacteria by consuming contaminated grass and hay, or by inhaling spores.

“Although anthrax is rare, it is not uncommon,” said State Veterinarian Dr. Dennis Hughes. “A few cases are reported in the United States almost every year. Fortunately, there’s an effective vaccine available. Producers are encouraged to discuss preventative vaccinations with their veterinarians. If anthrax is suspected and confirmed by your veterinarian in your livestock, you need to vaccinate as quickly as possible.”

Acute fever, staggering, difficulty breathing and seizures, followed by rapid death (usually within 48 hours), are all common signs of anthrax in livestock. After exposure to the anthrax bacteria, it usually takes three to seven days for animals to show symptoms of the disease. Anthrax can affect cattle, deer, other livestock, dogs and even people.

“Farmers and ranchers make it a priority to protect the health and safety of their animals,” said Dr. Hughes. “If a laboratory confirms the presence of anthrax, NDA will work closely with the affected livestock owner to stop movement of animals and implement control measures on the property. Control measures include removing animals from the pasture where anthrax deaths are suspected so spores can’t infect the remaining animals, vaccinations, and properly disposing of dead animals and infected materials.”

Since anthrax also carries a risk to people, those handling the anthrax vaccine, infected animals and/or contaminated animal products should do so with care. Wash hands thoroughly, wear long sleeves and gloves, do not move carcasses as that could release bacteria into the air, and do not salvage hides, horns, antlers, skulls or any other tissue from dead animals.

If you suspect anthrax in your livestock, immediately notify your local veterinarian or NDA at 402-471-2351.

For more information about anthrax, visit: [nda.nebraska.gov/animal/diseases/anthrax/index.html](http://nda.nebraska.gov/animal/diseases/anthrax/index.html) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at [cdc.gov/anthrax/basics/index.html](http://cdc.gov/anthrax/basics/index.html)

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