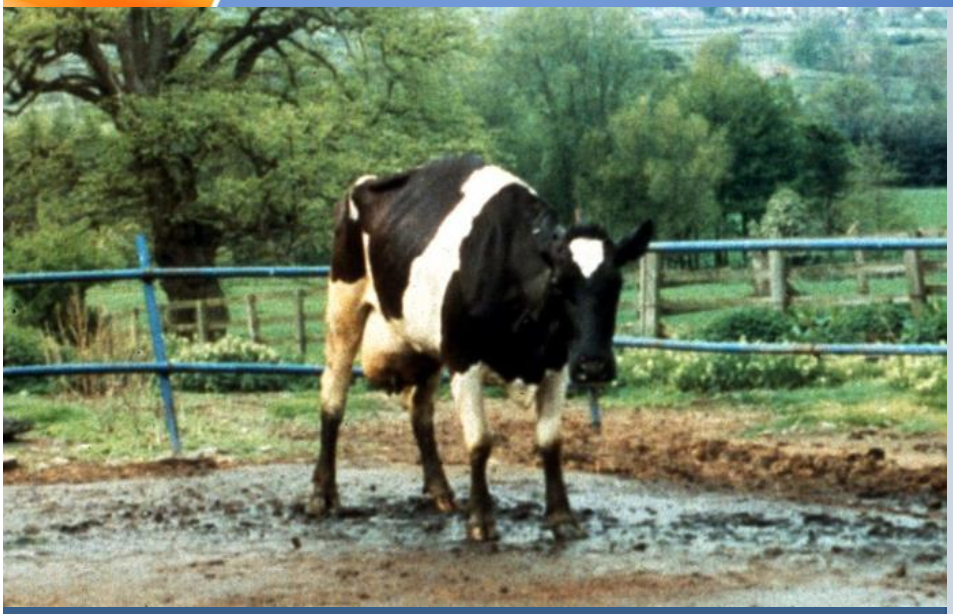
The Sentinel

Newsletter of the Florida State Agricultural Response Team



This cow with BSE displays abnormal posturing and weight loss. (Wikipedia)

Special Features of this Issue:

- *FDA Sampling Assignment Update Identifies Cyclospora in Herbs*
- *UF Veterinary Emergency Treatment Service (VETS) Team Update*
- *Herd of Cows Help Police Nab Carjacking Suspect*

USDA Confirms Atypical Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy

Last month, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services announced that it is working closely with the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) regarding an atypical case of Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), a neurologic disease of cattle, in a six-year-old, mixed-breed beef cow in Florida. This is often referred to as Mad Cow Disease.

This animal never entered slaughter channels and at no time presented a risk to the food supply, or to human health in the United States. This form of BSE is not contagious.

"This detection shows just how well our surveillance system works. We're grateful to our partners at the U.S. Department of Agriculture who work alongside us day in and day out to conduct routine surveillance and protect consumers," stated Commissioner of Agriculture Adam Putnam.

Atypical BSE is different than Classical BSE, and it generally occurs in older cattle and seems to arise rarely and spontaneously in all cattle populations.

USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) National Veterinary Services Laboratories (NVSL) confirmed that this cow was positive for atypical H-type BSE. The animal was tested as part of APHIS's routine surveillance of cattle that are deemed unsuitable for slaughter. APHIS and Florida veterinary officials are gathering more information on the case.

See Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy, page 3.

"This detection shows just how well our surveillance system works."

— Adam Putnam, Commissioner Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services

UF Veterinary Emergency Treatment Service (VETS) Team Update

The University of Florida VETS team provided the first Animal Technical Rescue Awareness Level class in early August, generously hosted by Jacksonville Equestrian Center. Participants included livestock owners, extension agents, canine search and rescue handlers, and a representative from agricultural law enforcement. This 8-hour training introduced these individuals to the equipment and techniques used in animal technical rescue with an emphasis on scene management and safety. The training completed with the participants working in small groups to create plans for tackling a variety of emergency scenarios.

The awareness class can also be completed online at https://xms.dce.ufl.edu/reg/groups/all/course.aspx?c=9760&ug=9&_ga=2.117061702.1571171136.1509384519-460641362.1502378249.

To learn more about UF VETS, please visit: https://www.vetmed.ufl.edu/about-the-college/administration/directors-office/about-vets/

Resources

Looking for Pet-Friendly Sheltering Information?

The SART website has posted new, valuable resources for pet-friendly sheltering.

For all the details, visit: https://flsart.org/jsp/petfriendly

Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (continued)

BSE is not contagious and exists in two types - classical and atypical. Classical BSE is the form that occurred primarily in the United Kingdom, beginning in the late 1980's, and it has been linked to variant Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease (*vCJD*) in people. The primary source of infection for classical BSE is feed contaminated with the infectious prion agent, such as meat-and-bone meal containing protein derived from rendered infected cattle.

Regulations from the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) have prohibited the inclusion of mammalian protein in feed for cattle and other ruminants since 1997 and have also prohibited high risk tissue materials in all animal feed since 2009.

The United States has a longstanding system of interlocking safeguards against BSE that protects public and animal health in the United States. Additionally, the BSE surveillance program allows USDA to detect the disease if it exists at very low levels in the U.S. cattle population.

To learn more, please visit the Factsheet provided by USDA:
http://www.aphis.usda.gov/publications/animal_health/fs-bse.pdf

Counties, Please Update Your Contact Information on FLSART.org

Please review your county emergency contact information at http://flsart.org/SART/choosecountyforview. If you need to make changes to your county contact information, please send a request to LeiAnna Tucker at LeiAnna.Tucker@FreshFromFlorida.com.

During an emergency, the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services provides necessary food and water to affected areas and helps protect animals and agriculture. The Department's Florida Forest Service is responsible for incident management and assists emergency responders in clearing debris and distributing supplies. Additionally, the Department's Office of Agricultural Law Enforcement provides law enforcement services to police departments and county sheriff's offices as necessary.

For more information and tips on hurricane preparedness, visit FloridaDisaster.org.

In the News

Short stories and updates from around the state…

YETies Lead Massive Service Learning Project on Disaster Preparedness
On August 1st, five of the Nassau County Youth Emergency Team (YET) graduates helped lead a massive service learning project at the 2018 4-H University in Gainesville. These five YETies are considered experts in their training and were personally requested by the 4-H University planning committee. This event led over 400 teenage 4-H members to be proactive about disaster preparedness and community outreach. At the completion of this event 1,000 starter preparedness kits were created and will be distributed throughout the state of Florida to families in need. Funding and donations for the bags were provided by the University of Florida IFAS and 4-H, the University of Florida's EDEN, and the United Way. Guest speakers also included representation from Volunteer Florida, Nassau County Emergency Management, and Dr. Forrest Masters. The youth led a one-hour workshop to their peers to discuss the fundamentals of emergency planning and conducted the bag creation.

West Nile Virus: West Nile Virus (WNV): Neurologic clinical signs began on August 10 for the WNV case confirmed in Levy County. The eight-year old mare was last vaccinated approximately five years ago and was euthanized due to severe neurologic clinical signs and a poor prognosis. West Nile Virus is an arthropod-borne virus (arbovirus) spread by the bite of infected mosquitoes and causes neurological disease. The virus primarily affects birds, but can also infect horses, bats, cats, dogs, squirrels, alligators, and humans.

SART Steering Committee Meeting
The next meeting is scheduled for September 13, 2018, at the USDA Farm Service Agency in Gainesville, Florida. This meeting is for members of the SART Steering Committee.

SART Advisory Board Meeting
The next meeting is scheduled for November 8, 2018. Location is to be determined.

Save-the-Date: 2019 SART Planning Conference

Mark your calendars for May 29, 30 and 31, 2018, in St. Pete Beach, FL. SART sponsors a biennial statewide conference for all Florida counties and SART partner agencies. More details will be coming soon!

FDA Sampling Assignment Update Identifies Cyclospora in Herbs

A risk-based, preventive approach to food safety is at the core of the FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). For many years, FDA has used product sampling and testing as one tool to better characterize microbial risk. Beginning in 2014, the agency began developing a new, more robust approach to sampling assignments to assess microbial contamination in food commodities. Under this new approach, the FDA collects a statistically-valid number of samples of targeted foods over a shorter period of time (12-18 months) to help identify common factors among positive findings. The sampling design for each food takes into account the volume of the target food that is both imported and produced domestically, and the number of states/countries that produce the target food, to reflect what U.S. consumers are likely to find in the marketplace.

Commodities sampled to date under the new approach have included sprouts, whole fresh avocados, raw milk cheese, cucumbers, and hot peppers. For fiscal year 2018, the FDA has been sampling fresh herbs, specifically basil, parsley, and cilantro, along with processed avocado and guacamole, with samples coming from both domestic and imported sources. Fresh cilantro, parsley and basil are typically eaten without having undergone a 'kill step' (such as cooking) to reduce or eliminate pathogens and are grown low to the ground, making them susceptible to contamination. The sampling assignment was developed to allow FDA to obtain baseline estimates of the prevalence of Salmonella and Shiga toxin-producing E. coli (STEC) in these herbs.

The agency added to this sampling assignment its recently developed and validated new analytical method to test for the parasite Cyclospora cayetanensis. Cyclospora has caused outbreaks in the U.S. linked to imported produce, including basil and cilantro. Although it's unknown exactly how food and water become contaminated with Cyclospora, prior outbreaks have been associated with produce grown under insanitary conditions. This highlights the importance of strong sanitation and worker hygiene practices to prevent contamination, since rinsing or washing food is not likely to remove the parasite.

To read more, please visit:
https://www.fda.gov/Food/NewsEvents/ConstituentUpdates/ucm618781.htm

Food Safety and Food Defense Report

A special section dedicated to feed and food emergency planning and response.

FDACS' Division of Food Safety is responsible for assuring the public of a safe, wholesome and properly represented food supply through permitting and inspection of food establishments, inspection of food products, and performance of specialized laboratory analysis on a variety of food products sold or produced in the state. The Division of Food Safety monitors food from farm gate through processing and distribution to the retail point of purchase.

- FDACS' Cleone Cooper and Summer Williams attended Georgia's Rapid Response Team Full Scale Training Exercise August 15-16, 2018. The training exercise was held at the state-of-the-art emergency management Guardian Center training campus in Perry, Georgia. The exercise scenario included two food processing facilities discovered to have radiologically contaminated food products. The product left the manufacturing facility and was then found at several locations around the state of Georgia and surrounding states. One location included a "VIP event" at the Super Bowl. Cleone and Summer played roles as manufactured food facility workers during the first stage of the exercise and observers during the second stage of the exercise. Atlanta will be hosting the Super Bowl in 2019 and Florida has the next two Super Bowls in Miami (2020) and Tampa (2021).

- FDACS Division of Food Safety hosted an open house for the Florida medical marijuana industry in Davie, Florida on July 24, 2018. The meeting provided industry partners an opportunity to ask questions regarding the food manufacturing, permitting, and inspection processes, as they relate to Medical Marijuana Treatment Centers who are interested in the production of edibles. Over 20 people attended the open house.

- Food Safety and Food Defense team members will be attending the 2018 Association of Food and Drug Officials of the Southern States (AFDOSS) Annual Conference in Gatlinburg, Tennessee on September 9-12. FDACS' Matt Colson (Vice President of AFDOSS) will be presenting on Food Safety and Cannabis. Jamie DeMent, Florida Department of Health, will be presenting an outbreak scenario activity from FDA's Coordinated Outbreak Response and Evaluation (CORE) Network.

Herd of Cows Help Police Nab Carjacking Suspect

Last month, Sanford police captured a suspect who ran from the crash of a stolen car. The woman, Jennifer Kaufman, fled into a cow pasture to evade authorities.

In an aerial police video recording posted on WKMG ClickOrlando. the pilot advised Sanford police "for a good visual" to look for the "large group of cows" chasing the suspect. The owner of the bovine, Richard Kondracki, said his cows had never had a problem with acting aggressively, but they may have been nervous and decided to follow Kaufman.

For the full story, visit: https://www.clickorlando.com/strange-florida/cows-herd-suspected-car-thief-into-custody

Please log in and update your membership information online at:

www.FLSART.org

About the *SART Sentinel*

The *SART Sentinel* is an email newsletter prepared monthly by the members of the **Florida State Agricultural Response Team**. Past issues of the *Sentinel* are archived on the Florida SART website at www.flsart.org.

If you have a story or photo that you would like to have considered for publication in the *SART Sentinel*, please contact the editors.

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