

PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Attachment: Overview Sheet

Cattle at Puyallup Fair Affected By Malignant Catarrhal Fever *Virus Poses No Threat to Humans, But Can Be Fatal to Cattle*

Puyallup, WA, Dec. 4, 2008 – The Washington State Veterinarian has confirmed that 19 cattle that exhibited at the 2008 Puyallup Fair in the Dairy Barn Complex the last five days of the Fair have died of Malignant Catarrhal Fever (MCF). No quarantine actions are warranted; as cattle do not spread the disease to other cattle or humans. The State Veterinarian, Washington State Dept. of Agriculture, Washington State University Animal Disease Research Unit, and the Puyallup Fair are involved in this investigation at this time.

A total of 16 of the affected cattle were owned by FFA students who were participating in the FFA State Fair, and three of the cattle were Fair demonstration animals.

MCF, which does not affect humans, is caused primarily by two different herpes viruses, one found in the wildebeest as a host and one found in sheep as the host. The latter is the virus in this instance, which kills the cattle. The host (sheep) is clinically unaffected by the infection with the virus, but serves as a source of infection for susceptible animals, such as cattle, deer, bison, water buffalo and pigs.

The Washington Department of Agriculture states that MCF poses no threat to human health and cannot be transmitted between people and animals, nor is it contagious in cattle.

A large percentage of the veterinarians in the state have never even seen a MCF-related death. Dr. Leonard Eldridge, DVM, State Veterinary and his team are currently developing biosecurity practices to mitigate risk in the future.

The Puyallup Fair has been working closely with the State Veterinarian office once they were first notified, and sent a letter on Nov. 20th to related open class exhibitors outlining symptoms and the fact that it is not contagious between cattle, while FFA contacted chapter advisors. Two meetings have followed, with communication continuing with all involved.

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The Puyallup Fair

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The State Veterinary office will be developing protocol and educational materials concerning this issue for fairs statewide once the investigation is complete, and the Puyallup Fair will be creating specific protocol for their animal barns.

Most sheep around the world can shed this virus, though adolescent sheep are known to shed the virus 50-300 times more than adult sheep, according to MCF expert, Hong Li, DVM, PhD, Research Microbiologist at Washington State University.

There is not enough research data to determine if genes play a part in which cattle fall ill to the virus, and which ones don't. Dr. Li indicated that it is unusual to have so many cattle affected at one time.

There is no vaccine or treatment available to prevent MCF. To date, the strain can not be recreated in the lab, which makes it more difficult to research. The only prevention at this juncture involves management controls, including separation of clinically susceptible species, or production of virus-free carrier species, which is conducted at zoos.

Domestically or abroad, fairs and similar events where animals gather have not had a history of a MCF cattle mortality rate of this magnitude on record. It may be that with the 30-60 day (average) incubation period, the reporting of a MCF death is not linked to an event that draws sheep and cattle. The International Association of Fairs and Expositions has no record of any of their members experiencing this type of loss, including many fairs in operation for over 100 years.

For further MCF information, contact the State Veterinarian office at (360) 902-1878.

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(NOTE: Overview Fact Sheet: Malignant Catarrhal Fever/Puyallup Fair is attached on next two pages.)

Overview Fact Sheet: Malignant Catarrhal Fever / Puyallup Fair 12-04-08

Malignant Catarrhal Fever (MCF) Facts

What is MCF?	MCF is caused primarily by two different herpes viruses, one found in the wildebeest as a host and one found in sheep as the host. The latter is the virus in this instance, which kills the cattle. The host (sheep) is clinically unaffected by the infection with the virus, but serves as a source of infection for susceptible animals, such as cattle, deer, bison, water buffalo and pigs.
Are humans affected?	No. No quarantine actions are warranted; cattle do not spread the disease to other cattle or humans.
Is it fatal?	Yes, in this instance it is fatal to cattle.
Incubation Period:	30-60 days (average)
Who sheds the virus?	Sheep worldwide can shed this virus, though adolescent sheep are known to shed the virus 50-300 times more than adult sheep. They start shedding at two months of age, and peak between four to six months, but continue to carry the virus. (source: Hong Li, DVM, PhD, Research Microbiologist at Washington State University).
Past MCF incidents:	<p>Dr. Li indicated that it is unusual to have so many cattle affected. It is more common to find a few cattle in a hundred affected if the virus is transferred by sheep. MCF cattle deaths have been reported in very small numbers in Texas, North Carolina and Colorado, and have not been related.</p> <p>There have been two large incidents involving MCF in the United States. A bison ranch in Colorado in 2002 saw a total of 7.1% of the herd affected, while 51.5% of the bison herd in Twin Falls, Idaho were affected in 2003. All affected bison died.</p>
Which cattle are susceptible?	There is not enough research data to determine if genes play a part in which cattle fall ill to the virus, and which ones don't. In bison, research has concluded that gene susceptibility does make a difference if bison get the virus.
Impact factors:	Research has found that environmental factors can impact virus transference, with direct sunlight killing the virus, while cool, moist conditions are ideal for the virus. Mechanical vectors, such as bird transference, is not known.
Prevention:	There is no vaccine or treatment available to prevent MCF. To date, the strain can not be recreated in the lab, which makes it more difficult to research. The only prevention to date involves management controls, including separation of clinically susceptible species, or production of virus-free carrier species, which is conducted at zoos.

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MCF / Puyallup Fair Incident-Specific Facts

- Involved entities: Washington State Veterinarian, Washington State Dept. of Agriculture, Washington State University Animal Disease Research Unit, and the Puyallup Fair.
- After the traditional MCF incubation period, 19 cattle that exhibited at the 2008 Puyallup Fair the last five days in the Dairy Barn Complex have died of Malignant Catarrhal Fever (MCF).
- 16 of the cattle were owned by FFA students: Lynden (7), Arlington (3), Rainier (2), Fife (1), Elma (1), Sequim (1), and Centralia (1). 3 cattle were Fair demonstration animals, located in Buckley.
- On November 13, 2008 a Lynden, Washington veterinarian notified the State Veterinary office of several deceased cattle owned by a FFA member who had brought them to the Puyallup Fair. Since the incubation period timed to their showing at the Puyallup Fair, the Lynden vet notified the State Vet to see if other cattle may have been affected. The State Vet first had to conduct research to make certain that it was not a foreign animal disease, concluding after the multi-day test that it was MCF.
- Cattle and sheep open class exhibitors at the Fair, FFA chapter advisors, related state beef and dairy commissions, as well as large animal veterinarians in the state have been notified, and receive updated in information.
- Dr. Leonard Eldridge, DVM, State Veterinarian has met with the animal exhibitors in late-November at the Puyallup Fair & Events Center, and another meeting was held on Dec. 1, 2008, with presentations made by Dr. Paul Kohrs, Assistant State Veterinarian and MCF expert, Hong Li, DVM, PhD, Research Microbiologist at Washington State University.
- Dr. Kohrs stated at the December 1st meeting, “The State Veterinary office has not seen a MCF virus outbreak of this magnitude in cattle.”
- The State Veterinary office is currently developing biosecurity practices to mitigate risk in the future. A large percentage of the veterinarians in the state have never even seen a MCF-related death, the State Veterinarian office reported.
- Domestically or abroad, fairs and similar events where animals gather have not had a history of a MCF cattle mortality rate of this magnitude on record. With a longer incubation period, a MCF death may not be linked to an event that draws sheep and cattle two months prior. The International Association of Fairs and Expositions has no record of any of their members experiencing this type of loss, including many fairs in operation for over 100 years.
- The State Veterinary office will be developing protocol and educational materials concerning this issue for fairs statewide once the investigation is complete, and the Puyallup Fair will be creating specific protocol for their animal barns.

Prepared by: Public Relations Dept., The Puyallup Fair (Media contact: Karen LaFlamme, 253-841-5024 (Karen@thefair.com), confirmed by Washington Veterinary Office

December 4, 2008

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