

USDA Hopeful Horse Disease Is Contained

BILLINGS, Mont. (AP)—The U.S. Department of Agriculture is cautiously optimistic that the recent outbreak of Venezuelan equine encephalomyelitis, a dreaded horse disease, has been contained, a deputy administrator said Saturday.

"We want to be optimistic, but you hate to stick your neck out," said Dr. E. E. Saulmon at an informational conference with state veterinarians from five western states.

"It now looks like the stuff has been stopped," he said. "We haven't had a confirmed case since July 27."

Since the first confirmed case, July 9 in Brownsville, Texas, federal officials have registered a total of 59 cases, all within 11 counties in Texas, Saulmon said.

"I suspect we have VEE in our horse population in southern Texas," Saulmon said. "What this means, I just don't know. My guess is that we are going to have to live with it. I just hope we can come up with a good vaccine."

But Dr. John Safford, Montana state veterinarian, said he would not allow the VEE vaccine to be used. Others at the conference concurred.

"We cannot live with our conscience if we allow the disease into the state," Safford said.

Saulmon said he has not heard of any cases in which the vaccine has induced the disease.

Saulmon said the government's efforts to stop the disease by vaccinations and spraying in 11 southwestern states would cost \$17.5 million.