

Vet: Swine Fever 'At Our Door'

By Don Mahan
(The Register's Farm Editor)

A federal animal health official called Tuesday for "greater vigilance" to thwart entry of serious foreign livestock diseases into the U.S. and greater cooperation between various interests of the livestock industry.

One of the most serious disease threats stems from African Swine Fever, which Dr. E. E. Saulmon described as "at our very doorstep." This disease was uncovered in Cuba last summer.

Dr. Saulmon is a veterinarian with the department of administration for veterinary services, with the Agricultural Research Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C.

He spoke on the threat of "exotic foreign diseases" at the ninetieth annual conference of the Iowa Veterinary Medical Association at Hotel Fort Des Moines.

African Swine Fever is similar to hog cholera, but is far more deadly. There is no immunization now available.

The disease spread from Africa to Portugal in 1907, and then broke out in Spain, France and Italy before its 1971 appearance in Cuba. Several hundred thousand hogs were destroyed there to halt the disease.

Its presence in Cuba, only 90 miles from the U.S., poses a real threat to the nation's swine industry, Dr. Saulmon said.

Cholera

Dr. Saulmon noted that the U.S. livestock industry is threatened with the possibility of foreign diseases "as the world has shrunk" through increased international travel.

The threat of such disease entry comes he added, at a time when the desire exists to improve living standards in various countries of the world by increasing livestock production and producing more meat.

He noted the successful efforts to eradicate diseases, such as bovine pneumonia, and the nearly-won battle to eradicate hog cholera.

But then he said that "there is an ever-increasing opportunity for the spread of infection" of the serious foreign animal diseases such as African Swine Fever, Hoof and Mouth Disease, rinderpest and poultry diseases.

He pointed to the Venezuelan equine encephalitis (VEE) outbreak in Texas last year and examples of the control programs used to combat a foreign disease threat.

About 4,000 state and federal animal health workers moved in to eradicate the disease through vaccinations, quarantines and aerial spraying (to control mosquitoes which can carry the infection).

Man-Animal Diseases

While proud of this effort to thwart VEE, Dr. Saulmon warned that the horse disease might reappear this year, and possibly outside of the southern U.S. areas where in 1971 the disease first hit the U.S.

He stressed that prompt reporting of disease is the most important part of the control program, and that local veterinarians represent "our first line of defense" in bringing outbreaks under check.



DR. E. E. SAULMON



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