EPIZOOTIC HEMORRHAGIC DISEASE IN COLORADO
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Epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) is an acute, infectious, and potentially fatal viral disease most commonly found in deer in the northern United States and southern Canada but with known outbreaks in whitetail deer in the southeastern United States, It has recently been diagnosed in a number of yaks in two locations within Larimer County. Antelope are known to be susceptible along with cattle but perhaps to a lesser degree than deer. As of this date, no cattle have been diagnosed with EHD in Colorado this year; however that does not negate the need to be aware of the possibility of its occurrence. Although similar to another more familiar hemorrhagic disease, bluetongue, the two diseases are antigenically different.

Like bluetongue, the mode of transmission is via a Culicoides biting midge with most outbreaks occurring in the late summer to early fall (August-October) and ceasing abruptly with the onset of frost since there is no animal to animal transmission.

Clinical symptoms of note in the known infected yak included fever, inappetance, depression with ocular-nasal discharge, dyspnea suggestive of respiratory infection, some mild bleeding from the mouth along with one animal showing some mild lameness. The clinical signs of disease and the resultant damage are related to the severity of the hemorrhage. Known infections in cattle result in similar clinical symptoms as mentioned for the yak. As might be expected, severe drop in milk production and if infected at a critical time of approximately 70-120 days of gestation, abortions or birth of deformed calves may result.

Diagnosis can be confirmed by doing PCR testing on whole blood as the submission of choice. Additional submission of spleen, liver, heart, lung and kidney may be helpful for diagnostic purposes if a blood sample is not available.

Differential diagnoses should include bluetongue, malignant catarrhal fever, BVD, IBR, vesicular stomatitis (VS) and foot and mouth disease (FMD).

There is no specific treatment for the EHD virus infection and no vaccine for EHD is currently available. Supportive treatment with anti-inflammatory drugs, preferably NSAIDS for the reasons of pregnancy considerations as well as immune response affects, antibiotics to prevent secondary bacterial infection, supplemental feed and methods of combatting dehydration are helpful in affected animals showing severe lameness or those that go off feed.