



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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DISEASE AFFECTING CATTLE DETECTED IN TENNESSEE

NASHVILLE – The state veterinarian is announcing detection of *Theileria orientalis* in a herd of cattle in Middle Tennessee.

Theileria is a tickborne parasite that infects red and white blood cells and causes severe anemia in cattle. There is no vaccine to prevent the illness or effective treatment. Once an animal is infected, it is a carrier for life.

The affected herd in Maury County showed signs of illness and lethargy, and despite veterinary attention and antibiotic treatments, ultimately some animals died.

Theileria is not a threat to human health. Humans cannot become sick from contact with affected cattle, and consuming meat from affected cattle is safe provided the meat has been cooked to an appropriate temperature.

“The Asian longhorned tick is a common vector for this illness,” State Veterinarian Dr. Samantha Beaty said. “Although we have not yet confirmed the presence of ALT in Maury County, we know it’s already taken hold in several other Tennessee counties and will continue to spread. Cattle producers should take steps to protect their herds.”

Producers can minimize risk by keeping cattle out of wooded areas and keeping pastures mowed short, particularly pastures that border woods. Producers should also regularly inspect cattle for ticks, use varying types of acaricides (ear tags, pours, back rubbers, etc.), use a clean needle for every injection, and notify a veterinarian if cattle show signs of lethargy or illness.

In partnership with the University of Tennessee and Virginia-Maryland College of Veterinary Medicine Diagnostic Lab, the Tennessee Department of Agriculture is collecting tick and blood samples from cattle to help identify the presence of the Asian longhorned tick and *Theileria orientalis* in Tennessee.

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The Tennessee Department of Agriculture is testing blood samples for *Theileria* for free until July 29, 2022. Results are available to producers upon request. Information gathered will be used to create county-level maps of tick and *Theileria* spread. Farm and ownership information will not be shared with the public.

If you would like to submit tick samples for identification or blood samples for *Theileria* testing, please contact the State Veterinarian's office at 615-837-5120 or Animal.health@tn.gov for more information.

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