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Anthrax outbreak in cattle herd in Germany

Report Categories:

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Report Highlights:

On July 12, 2012, anthrax was detected in a cattle herd in Saxony-Anhalt, Germany. According to the German Federal Research Institute for Animal Health, eight animals died, all of which came from the same herd. Local officials quarantined the affected area and relocated the herd. Anthrax was last detected in Germany in 2009.

General Information:

On July 12, 2012, anthrax, an infectious bacterial disease that mainly affects cloven-hoofed animals, was detected in a cattle herd in Saxony-Anhalt, Germany. According to the German Federal Research Institute for Animal Health (Friedrich Loeffler Institute or FLI), eight animals died, all of which came from the same herd. Local officials quarantined the affected area and relocated the remaining herd. Officials suspect that feed was the source of infection and the affected pasture is being examined by official epidemiologists. However, the source of the outbreak remains unclear. As a precaution, people in contact with the infected herd were treated with antibiotics. So far, the outbreak of anthrax in Saxony-Anhalt has little effect on the surrounding area and farms. None of the affected animals entered the food chain. According to German human and animal health officials, the outbreak poses no exceptional infection risk to other animals or to humans.

Anthrax is a notifiable infectious disease, meaning that German veterinarians are obliged to report to officials when cases are suspected. The current outbreak was officially registered in the national Animal Disease Reporting System, and will be listed in the Animal Health Report published by the Federal Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Consumer Protection (BMELV). The Animal Health Report is an official monthly notification by BMELV. In addition, at an international level, Germany should also report anthrax outbreaks to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE).

According updates issues by local authorities on July 16 and 17, 2012 no further infections of cattle in connection with the anthrax outbreak have been reported. However, the herd will be under observation for two more weeks

Anthrax was last detected in Germany in the southern state of Bavaria in 2009.

The following is an unofficial translation of the press release issued by local authorities on July 12, 2012

(Unofficial translation)

‘Ministry of Agriculture and Environment - Press Release No.: 087/2012 from July 12, 2012

Anthrax outbreak in cattle herd

Magdeburg. Anthrax was detected in a cattle herd in the district of Stendal, Saxony-Anhalt. So far, seven animals perished due to this infectious disease. Today, the Federal Research Institute for Animal Health, Friedrich-Loeffler-Institute (FLI) in Jena, confirmed the diagnosis of the competent authorities of Stendal.

At least two of the dead animals, and possibly a third, ended up in the River Elbe, where police are searching for them. Surrounding German States have accordingly been notified. The authorities ask they immediately be informed if a dead animal is detected.

Anthrax is an infectious disease caused by a bacteria (*Bacillus anthracis*), which mainly infects cloven-hoofed animals. However, humans can contract anthrax as well if exposed to a high dose of anthrax spores. The authorities are investigating persons who might have been in contact with the infected animals.

The animal health officials in Stendal immediately took all necessary measures, which included quarantine on the affected cattle herd, trade bans, traffic restrictions and notification in the national animal disease outbreak register.

The source of the outbreak remains unclear. Since anthrax spores can survive in the ground for decades, authorities are examining whether the pastures might have formerly been used as an area used to bury carcasses..

Background: The majorities of anthrax findings occur in areas with grassland and pasture farming. The number of infections is likely to increase in years with high precipitation. Anthrax was last detected in Bavaria, Germany in 2009.

With regard to the occurrence of anthrax in the wild and domesticated animals, as well as in humans, differing degrees of susceptibility play a major role. For example, sheep, goats, cattle, horses, camels, reindeers, elephants and mink are highly susceptible, while dogs, cats, rats and humans are moderately susceptible.

A transmission from human to human is presumed to be very unlikely; and no case has ever been documented.'

Source:

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