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## **Common Deer Virus Found in Southern Ohio Cattle Populations**

*State officials stress outbreak is not a human health concern.*

REYNOLDSBURG, Ohio (Aug. 30, 2007) – Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) officials today confirmed the discovery of epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD) -- a common white-tailed deer virus -- in two Pike County cattle farms. This marks the state's first-ever case of the virus in cattle, but officials stress that it poses no threat to human health or to the safety of meat consumption.

The ODA Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory in Reynoldsburg confirmed EHD in cattle populations in southern Ohio. The virus, which has been found in several surrounding states, occurs annually in deer herds across North America but is less common in cattle. In the Pike County cattle, officials identified a wild strain of the EHD virus, which will run its course much like the common flu. In deer, EHD is typically fatal.

Both cattle and deer contract EHD from gnats or biting flies. The virus cannot be spread from animal to animal or from animal to humans. Insects, however, can contract the virus from infected deer or cattle and pass it on to surrounding populations. This summer's drought has forced animals and insects to common watering spots, increasing the spread of EHD. Typically, the onset of cold weather suppresses the disease as frosts drives insects into winter inactivity.

Although test results have not confirmed the Southern Ohio deer population has been infected with EHD, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources will continue to monitor and test deer in this area for the virus.

According to the University of Georgia's annual Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study, EHD is the most common ailment affecting deer in the Eastern United States. Outbreaks of the disease have occurred in Indiana, Kentucky, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia this year. The most recent Ohio outbreaks occurred in 2003 in Clermont and Brown counties. The disease is common in portions of the northern Great Plains and the southeastern United States. It was first identified in 1955 in New Jersey.

Mule deer, elk, bighorn sheep and pronghorn antelope are also susceptible to the disease.

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