



Haemorrhagic Disease (EHD) in Alberta 2013

Epizootic haemorrhagic disease (EHD) virus was identified in a white-tailed deer found dead in southern Alberta south of Foremost ~30km north of the U.S. border on September 16, 2013. At least 50 other deer and three antelope were found dead in the vicinity. Carcasses were too decomposed for extensive necropsy; however, tissues from one deer and one antelope were suitable for virus testing. EHD virus was present in the spleen of the white-tail. We are pursuing strain typing of the virus.

Field Information

On September 5, 2013 the Foremost Fish and Wildlife office received a call from the public regarding a cluster of at least six dead white-tailed deer near a water reservoir on the Milk River drainage approximately 30 km north of the border with Montana. The carcasses were found incidental to harvest activities in the area.

Given the unusual number of carcasses, the proximity to water, the location in the far south, the time of year, and an ongoing disease outbreak in the northern states, EHD was considered a possibility. Field staff were requested to document any reported mortality and collect carcasses if suitable for post mortem examination.

Over the next two weeks additional dead deer and a few antelope carcasses were reported to the Foremost office.

Generally only decomposed carcasses were found. However, one sick deer in a farmyard was described as being sickly, thin, shaky, and appeared 'sweaty'. Unfortunately this deer moved off and was not seen again.

Two fresh dead carcasses (one white-tail, one antelope) were collected and submitted to the Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development diagnostic lab in Lethbridge for examination.

Cumulative tallies from September 5 to 16 indicated at least 50 different deer carcasses (believed to be white-tailed deer) and a few dead antelope.

Lab Information

A relatively fresh dead adult antelope and an adult male white-tailed deer were examined. Gross visible lesions were largely obscured by early decomposition but tissues were suitable for virus testing.

Tissues of the deer were PCR positive for EHD. We are pursuing further tests to determine the strain of EHD.