

 **STATEMENT**

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**STATEMENT BY CHIEF VETERINARY MEDICAL OFFICER JOHN
CLIFFORD REGARDING DETECTION OF MALIGNANT CATARRHAL
FEVER IN COMMERCIAL CATTLE
APRIL 18, 2008**

“Yesterday, we received confirmatory test results from our National Veterinary Services Laboratories in Ames, Iowa, diagnosing wildebeest-associated malignant catarrhal fever (MCF) in a cow from a mixed-use operation in Texas. The disease appears to have spread to the animal from exposure to captive wildebeests on the same property. It is important to note that MCF is not a contagious disease in cattle and poses no threat to human health. It cannot be transmitted between people and animals.

“USDA foreign animal disease diagnosticians and state animal health officials are conducting an epidemiological investigation into the incident and are tracing the movement of all potentially affected animals from the premises of origin. One-hundred thirty-four breeding heifers from this herd were recently shipped to Illinois, Arkansas, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. Because cattle cannot transmit the disease to other cattle or livestock, the interstate movement of these animals poses no risk.

“All cattle from the herd of origin have been placed on hold by State animal health officials, and APHIS will be working with the States and owners to depopulate the animals. The owners will be indemnified. In addition, the Texas mixed-use operation is currently under quarantine by State animal health officials.

“MCF is a herpes virus, and two strains are known to exist—a sheep-associated strain and a wildebeest-associated strain. Cattle can contract both strains of the disease from affected sheep or wildebeests, but do not spread either strain. The sheep-associated strain of MCF is known to occur in the United States. The wildebeest-associated strain of MCF, however, is foreign to the United States. Both strains have high fatality rates in cattle. USDA is developing action plans to prevent future exposure of susceptible species to potentially infected wildebeest.

As a member nation of the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), we have notified OIE and our trading partners of this detection. OIE requires member nations to report any occurrence of certain transmissible animal diseases in order to successfully

monitor animal health on a worldwide basis. Wildebeest-associated MCF is a reportable animal disease, although it is not classified as a disease that has the potential for serious, rapid spread or public health consequences.”

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