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## **Naturally occurring anthrax identified in Klamath County steer**

The Oregon State Public Health Laboratory has confirmed naturally occurring anthrax as the cause of death in a Klamath County steer, it was announced today. While the incident does not pose a human public health risk, state officials say, it can be an issue for exposed livestock.

The incident is isolated to one herd in Klamath County. Oregon Department of Agriculture officials have been working to protect neighboring cattle. The steer identified with anthrax died August 22. Two other steers died at around the same time. ODA oversaw the deep burial of the affected animals and has quarantined the ranch; other cattle on the ranch will be vaccinated and monitored. There is no indication of any anthrax exposure among other cattle on the ranch.

“The risk is minimal outside the affected ranch,” said Brad Leamaster, D.V.M., state veterinarian. “Oregon has not had an anthrax case in animals in more than 50 years, but anthrax outbreaks are not uncommon in other parts of the Western United States.”

Anthrax is a serious veterinary disease because it can kill a large number of animals in a short time. Cattle ranchers should consult their veterinarians and vaccinate their livestock if deemed appropriate. Ranch workers who develop unexplained skin infections should seek medical attention.

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Anthrax is caused by a naturally occurring spore-forming bacterium; the spores can lie dormant in soil. The disease most commonly occurs in wild and domestic mammals such as cattle, sheep, goats, camels, antelope, and other herbivores. Very rarely, humans may be infected if they handle infected animals.

"This particular incident does not pose a public health risk. Our focus is preventing human exposure specifically among those who have handled the animals," said Paul Cieslak, M.D., public health physician with the Oregon Health Authority. "The veterinarian who did the necropsy took precautions to prevent infection and is doing well. Those who contact cattle where anthrax has been confirmed are at some risk — though very low risk — of getting anthrax through scratches in the skin."

In both cows and humans, anthrax is treatable with antibiotics if caught immediately. Signs to look for include a skin infection that starts as a little bump and then turns into a blister, which ruptures and forms an ulcer that turns coal-black in the base. Anthrax is not spread from person to person.

Learn more at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention anthrax [website](#).

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