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New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

P. O. Box 402, Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0402

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Bob Martin, Commissioner

**IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE CONFIRMS BLUETONGUE VIRUS IN TWO DEER; DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE URGES LIVESTOCK OWNERS TO REPORT ANY SUSPECTED ANIMAL ILLNESSES**

**(P112) TRENTON** -- The Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Fish and Wildlife has confirmed New Jersey's first cases of bluetongue virus in two deer.

The virus was confirmed in one deer that died in Basking Ridge, Somerset County on Sept. 4 and another that died in Stirling, Morris County on Sept. 19. The clinical signs of bluetongue are identical to epizootic hemorrhagic disease (EHD), which has occurred seven times in the state since 1995.

"The bluetongue virus is widely distributed in the United States, but has not been previously found in deer in New Jersey," said Division of Fish and Wildlife Director Dave Chanda. "Both diseases are spread to animals by the bite of a certain type of midge. Neither disease can be transmitted to people. While EHD is only found in deer populations, the bites of the midge can transmit bluetongue to certain types of livestock."

The clinical signs of disease caused by both viruses are identical, and the two can only be differentiated by testing and virus isolation. The potential for disease transmission will end when frost kills the midges.

People are not at risk by handling infected deer, being bitten by infected midges, or eating infected deer meat, although the Division of Fish and Wildlife strongly advises against consuming meat from any game animal that appears ill.

Unlike EHD, bluetongue is a disease of concern in ruminant livestock such as sheep, llama, alpaca, goats, and cows. It causes a similar disease in all ruminants with variable mortality rates depending on virus strain and livestock species affected. Horses are not affected.

Effects are usually most severe in improved sheep breeds such as fine wool and mutton breeds. No cases of livestock illnesses have been reported.

**Livestock that appear to exhibit any of the symptoms associated with bluetongue should be reported to the New Jersey Department of Agriculture, Division of Animal Health at (609) 671-6400.**

The New Jersey Department of Agriculture's Animal Health Diagnostic Laboratory (AHDL) can assist in diagnosing suspected bluetongue cases by offering testing and necropsy services. The AHDL can be contacted by calling (609) 406-6999 or e-mailing [jerseyvetlab@ag.state.nj.us](mailto:jerseyvetlab@ag.state.nj.us)

More information about the tests offered can be found on the AHDL website:  
<http://www.jerseyvetlab.nj.gov/>

**Deer that appear to exhibit any of the symptoms associated with bluetongue or EHD should be reported to the Division of Fish and Wildlife Bureau of Wildlife Services at (908) 735-7040 or the Division's Office of Fish and Wildlife Health and Forensics at (908) 236-2118.**

Both diseases are contracted from the bite of a species of midge fly known as *Culicoides sp.* Outbreaks typically begin in late summer. Symptoms in deer may include difficulty standing, drooling, and emitting foam from the mouth or nose. Because the disease causes fever, sick or dead deer are often seen in or near water.

Clinical signs in livestock include, but are not limited to, fever, listlessness, edema and congestion of mouth, nose, eyes, and coronary bands, mouth sores, lameness and a characteristic swelling of the tongue. Affected animals may act as carriers for an extended period after recovery.

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