The first two cases of vesicular stomatitis (VS) for 2009 have been diagnosed; one horse in Texas and one horse in New Mexico have tested positive for the livestock disease. The Colorado Department of Agriculture has put additional import requirements on livestock being imported from either state.

“The Colorado Department of Agriculture now requires a health screening to be performed on livestock coming from Texas or New Mexico within 48 hours of shipping into the state,” said Colorado State Veterinarian, Dr. Keith Roehr. “Veterinarians and livestock owners should also be aware of the signs of vesicular stomatitis and what actions they can do to help prevent the disease from entering their herds.”

VS is a viral disease that primarily affects cattle, horses, swine and occasionally sheep, goats and alpacas. VS appears to spread through insects, mechanical transmission and commingling of animals with infected animals. Clinical signs of the disease include salivation, blister-like lesions on the lips, nostrils, hooves, teats and in the mouth and raw tissue from blisters that could lead to lameness and weight loss.

Colorado has placed additional entry requirements on the import of livestock from New Mexico and Texas. If producers plan to export livestock, it is important to contact the state of destination to ensure that all entry requirements are met.

VS outbreaks are sporadic and have been diagnosed in the U.S. a number of times; the last case of VS in Colorado was in 2005. In 2004, 148 horses, 119 cattle, four sheep and goats and two alpacas were infected with the disease in Colorado on a total of 107 premises.

While there is no vaccine or cure for VS, there are antiseptic solutions that may help control secondary infections. There are also a number of things livestock owners can do to help prevent an infection in their herd.

—Avoid commingling livestock where other animals have tested positive for VS.

—Implement insect control such as fly wipes, sprays and foggers.

—Practice appropriate sanitation methods.

—Report any suspicious cases to a local veterinarian or the State Veterinarian's Office.

Visit www.colorado.gov/ag for more information. The "hot topics" section includes links to a VS fact sheet, photos and proper biosecurity practices.