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Media alert from the Media Scanning & Verification Cell, IDSP-NCDC.

Alert ID	Publication Date	Reporting Date	Place Name	News Source/Publication Language
6036	04.01.2021	05.01.2021	Dharmapuri Tamil Nadu	www.newindianexpress.com/English https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/tamil-nadu/2021/jan/04/new-pox-virus-takes-a-toll-on-cattle-in-dharmapuri-2245216.html
Title:	New pox virus takes a toll on cattle in district Dharmapuri, Tamil Nadu			
Action By CSU, IDSP -NCDC	Information communicated to DSU-Dharmapuri, SSU-Tamil Nadu			

With a new viral disease taking a toll on cattle, the Animal Husbandry department has started an awareness campaign across the district. The lumpy skin disease, which is new to the Indian subcontinent and does not have treatment or vaccination yet, has so far affected hundreds of bovines, according to officials.

Over the past two months, farmers in the district noticed boils on the skin of their cattle and buffaloes, causing difficulty in consuming food. The Animal Husbandry department, which conducted an investigation, identified the spread of lumpy skin disease in the region. The disease is caused by a pox virus, which is common in Africa, and some Asian countries.

Anantha Raj, a farmer who owns 15 head of cattle, said that three of them were infected with the lumpy skin disease. "Initially, we had no idea about the disease. On the first day, I noticed two or three lumps and ignored it. But I isolated the cattle, just in case," he said.

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**Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP), National Centre for Disease Control,
Ministry Of Health & Family Welfare, Government of India**

22-Sham Nath Marg, Delhi – 110 054

For more information please contact: Media Scanning & Verification Cell: - Phone (011)23946029

Email: - idsp-msc@nic.in, idsp-npo@nic.in

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But a few days later, the infected cattle were completely covered in lumps, and when a veterinarian inspected them, he said that the viral infection is called periyammai and said that there was no vaccination or known treatment for the disease. "Now, two more are infected and it's hard to watch them struggle," he said.

Joint Director of Animal Husbandry Dr S Illangovan told TNIE that the infection is the first of its kind in Dharmapuri. The disease spreads through blood transmission by mosquitoes, houseflies, and lice. It also spreads through milk and direct contact.

This disease, which causes lumps or lesions on the skin, lasts for a period of 17 to 35 days. The cattle also develop high fever and swelling in the legs, which restricts their movement, he said.

Illangovan explained that the morbidity rate of the disease is 60%, which indicates that the chance of the infection spreading is high. However, the death rate is very low. "Farmers need not panic because the disease will heal by itself in one month. However, farmers have to keep the infected cattle isolated and keep the surrounding clean to prevent insect infestation, as they are the primary transmitters," he said.

Although the disease has no known treatment or vaccination, the Joint Director said that if treatment is offered to lesions or boils on the skin, the milk production levels of the cattle can be sustained. In rare cases, cows stop producing milk, he added.

Currently, the data on the number of deaths caused by the disease is not available, the official said. "But, while there have been hundreds of infections in the district, deaths have been very few," he said.

To raise awareness, the department has started conducting workshops and distributing pamphlets to educate farmers about the preventive methods. Doctors recommend a home-made ointment using Indian Acalypha, turmeric, garlic, gingelly oil, neem and tulsi leaves. Ayurvedic treatment involves feeding the infected cattle a concoction of betel leaves, pepper, rock salt and jaggery.

"Since the virus has appeared in India now, a vaccine will also be made available soon," Illangovan said. Meanwhile, farmers have been requested to report all infections to the Animal Husbandry department.

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