Laboratory studies in Buenos Aires have confirmed that a cow has died of rabies in the northern province [Santiago del Estero]. Rabies is a disease transmitted by the vampire bat ( _Desmodus rotundus_).

The new outbreak was located in the locality of Los Surgentes, near La Avenida (Alberdi department), where an outbreak of rabies occurred 2 years ago.

A few days ago, a rumor that several animals had been killed by rabies reached farmers and cattle producers. For this reason, 'El Liberal' handled the news with reserve, until veterinarian Carlos Krapovickas, Senasa [National Food Safety and Quality Service] officer and head of the area, confirmed that a few days ago a new outbreak of paralytic rabies had been detected.

The official said that his department has already made visits to the facility where the outbreak was reported and the surrounding areas, trying to establish the extent of the focus and eliminating potential vampires roosts. He said that, thanks to early detection of the problem, farmers were able to quickly start vaccinating the cattle. In addition the movement of herds has been banned to prevent a possible spread of the disease by contaminated animals.

With the emergence of these new cases of rabies, there have been 4 in the province of Santiago del Estero, specifically in the departments of Copo and Alberdi. In March 2008 the 1st cases were confirmed by the University of Corrientes in the area of La Avenida, located on the border of the Copo and Alberdi departments and through a large operation the outbreak of rabies was contained. In June 2008, the 2nd case appeared in La Morenita (Copo) and was confirmed by the rabies Institute in Resistencia (Chaco). The 3rd case was detected 20 km [12.5 mi] from Pampa de los Guanacos [Copo] in June 2010, confirmed by the University of Corrientes, the outbreak was contained through vaccination. The 4th episode was confirmed recently.

In all cases, SENASA deployed veterinarians from the province and from Buenos Aires to educate people about the location of vampire roosts in order to destroy them and gain control of the situation.

[Vampire bats are distributed in tropical areas of the western hemisphere from Argentina to Mexico, and have been responsible for transmitting rabies virus most frequently to cattle and equine animals, and infrequently to humans [by bite]. Of the 3 vampire bat species, _Desmodus rotundus_ is by far the most common rabies virus transmitter.

There are 2 options for rabies control in these situations -- vaccination of animals upon which the vampire bats feed, or reduction of the vampire bat populations. Vaccination of vampire bat hosts is the fastest and most effective approach when vampire bat-transmitted rabies appears in an area. In areas where repeated vampire bat-transmitted rabies occurs, control of these bats has been employed in some countries. Controlling vampire bats by eliminating their roosts is extremely difficult because these roosts can be hard to find. Effective vampire bat control has been accomplished by capturing bats in mist nets when they come to feed on livestock, and applying anticoagulant jelly (warfarin and similar products), which they and their roost-mates ingest on grooming.
Clinical signs of rabies in cattle may include evidence of neurological disease, loss of coordination (specially in hind legs), excessive salivation, anorexia, tenesmus, ataxia, drowsiness, dyspnea, aggressiveness, and in some cases, diarrhea and pneumonia. Rabies is preventable in cattle with a vaccine.

The paralytic form of rabies is first manifested by paralysis of the throat and masseter muscles, often with profuse salivation and inability to swallow. Dropping of the lower jaw is common in dogs. Owners frequently examine the mouth of dogs and livestock searching for a foreign body or administer medication with their bare hands, thereby exposing themselves to rabies. These animals may not be vicious and rarely attempt to bite. The paralysis progresses rapidly to all parts of the body, and coma and death follow in a few hours. The latter is very much what seems to be happening with the livestock described above.

Rabies is known to be transmitted by the 'bite' of the vampire bat because the virus resides in the saliva. Rabies is identified through testing of the brain of a deceased animal.

Rabies can pass from bovines to people, but the animal must bite the person or the person must have contact with saliva of the animal and it must enter the human body, through a cut, scratch, the mucus membranes of the eye, the nose, or the mouth. So it is not casual contact that will infect the person. The bovines usually have a distinctive bellow when they are infected with rabies. Although this is not a diagnostic quality, it is unusual enough that many veterinarians recognize it. Nevertheless consumption of diseased animals is not recommended.

References
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An image of the vampire bat _Desmodus rotundus_ can be seen at <http://animaldiversity.ummz.umich.edu/site/resources/mzm2/72.mr2.jpg/medium.jpg>, - Mod.TG

The HealthMap/ProMED-mail interactive map of Argentina can be seen at <http://healthmap.org/r/0gTp>, - Sr.Tech.Ed.MJ

[see also:
Rabies, bovine, equine, vampire bat - Argentina: (MN) 20100222.0594 2008
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Rabies, bovine, vampire bat, human exposure - Colombia: (BOL) 20081022.3342 Rabies, bovine, vampire bat - Argentina: (CT) 20080815.2533]