

Wyoming Livestock Board  
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## **Press Release to Clarify Blister Beetle Risks**

Pathologists at the Wyoming State Veterinary Laboratory report that the species of blister beetle found in central Fremont County and other areas this summer is one of the less toxic species of the blister beetle. Like all such insects, they swarm on alfalfa, especially during the time the plant is in bloom. If the hay is mowed while the beetles are on the alfalfa, the females are killed and deposit the toxin cantharidin on the hay. If a sufficient number of beetles contaminate the hay, there is a potential health risk to livestock, especially horses. The number of beetles required with this species is quite large compared to the larger and more toxic species seen in Oklahoma and Texas. The Wyoming State Veterinary Laboratory has never diagnosed poisoning by the *Epicautis pensylvania* beetle found this year in Wyoming. Hay producers and livestock feeders should be cautious; and if there is any question about a particular batch of hay, it should be fed to cattle rather than horses.

In a previous press release, the WLSB advised hay producers and horse owners to be aware that blister beetles had been identified in Wyoming and that there is potential health risk to livestock. To keep this alert and the risks in perspective, it is important to understand that the beetles have been confirmed on locations in central Wyoming. Fremont County Weed and Pest personnel have been very vigilant in their search for the pest and have examined hundreds of acres of alfalfa daily finding only the few confirmed premises.

Blister beetles are not new to Wyoming or Fremont County. It appears that the infestation is relatively light, and the species present is not extremely toxic. Caution is urged, but paranoia is not warranted. Wyoming and Fremont county hay is a quality product and risks appear to be minimal.

Dr. Jim Logan, WLSB State Veterinarian said “My Main concern is that people use caution and don’t be too complacent about this.”

For more information call the WLSB, Dr. Logan, Dr. Cook, the Fremont County Weed and Pest, or WSVL.

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