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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ohio Department of Agriculture Receives First-Ever U.S. Patent

REYNOLDSBURG, Ohio (April 4, 2008) – The Ohio Department of Agriculture recently received its first-ever U.S. patent for discovering a method to identify a potentially fatal strain of Equine Herpes Virus. The patent acknowledges the department’s pioneering work in identifying the strain and gives way to future research on developing vaccines.

“This discovery is a great accomplishment for our department and our diagnostic lab,” said Ohio Agriculture Director Robert Boggs. “We have top-of-the-line scientists working in our labs, and this patent proves the high-caliber work they perform every day for Ohio’s citizens.”

Scientists from the department’s Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory (ADDL) worked quickly to isolate and characterize the Equine Herpes Virus strand that caused the notable equine disease outbreak at the University of Findlay in 2003. The outbreak, which was a rare case of the virus that led to neurological disorder, was fatal for 13 horses and caused neurological disease in 100 more.

The virus, which is common in horses, only typically causes respiratory and reproduction problems. Currently, vaccinations are available to prevent these troubles but are not available to prevent neurological problems that certain strands of the virus can cause. In the University of Findlay instance, the horses had been vaccinated but still fell ill to the neurological disease.

The discovery of the identification method by ADDL virologist Dr. Yan Zhang lead to the invention and patent of a test to identify the Equine Herpes Virus strand that causes the rare neurological symptoms. In addition, Zhang has laid the groundwork and has even suggested a method for producing the first vaccine to protect horses from neurological effects of the virus.

“Diagnostic work is an important component of protecting Ohio’s livestock and equine, and an important part of the work performed by the department,” ADDL Director Dr. Beverly Byrum said. “We are proud to be part of this historical and unique opportunity.”

Ohio’s nationally accredited ADDL, housed at and operated by the Ohio Department of Agriculture, provides regulatory testing support for disease control programs and diagnostic laboratory services for veterinarians and livestock and poultry producers.

The federal patent was issued to the Ohio Department of Agriculture on Jan. 29, 2008, by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office, a division of the United State Department of Commerce.

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