

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Agriculture: Be On The Lookout For Bont Tick On Cattle

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John McCarthy **April 17, 2015**



ST. CROIX – The Department of Agriculture is running a television advertising campaign to make farmers aware that the bont tick has resurfaced in Frederiksted, but stressed that so far the harmful parasite is not spreading.

Nearly eradicated from the island in 2010, the bont tick is being monitored by Agriculture because the brightly-colored parasite can lead to heartwater disease in animals, according to Bethany Bradford, the Agriculture Department veterinarian.

“It’s just to keep the farmers and horse owners on the alert in case they see a tick they don’t recognize so that we can come and identify it,” Bradford told the *V.I. Consortium*.

Bradford said the Virgin Islands is the only place under the United States flag that has seen an appearance of the bont tick, but that it has been confined to only one farm in the Estate La Grange area of Frederiksted since it was first identified here.

U.S. Department of Agriculture officials are also monitoring the bont tick because they don't want it to spread to the mainland, she said. The presence of the parasite can lead to trade restrictions with the United States and the rest of the world.

Already the bont tick has resulted in cases of heartwater disease being detected in animals in Antigua and Guadeloupe, Bradford said.

The presence of bont tick in animals, primarily cattle, can lead to debilitating sickness and even death.

"It's completely a livestock disease issue," Bradford said.

If you have further questions about bont tick, please contact the Department of Agriculture at 778-0998.