

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Wet Weather Poses Greater Threat Of Disease To Livestock, Agriculture Commissioner Says

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Department of Agriculture Commissioner Carlos Robles said on Monday that wet weather increases the threat of diseases in livestock, and recommended that farmers fix leaky roofs and improve drainage in and around animal pens during the rainy season to reduce mud and wet manure.

Mr. Robles said wet and muddy pens and pastures put animals at risk for many health problems. He said mud can damage feet and make animals lame and unable to move around or get to their food. Additionally, stomach worms thrive in wet manure and on muddy pastures and can cause disease and even death in infected cattle, sheep, goats and pigs.

"Wet manure causes the release of ammonia into the air. The ammonia can irritate the animals' lungs and cause pneumonia. Farmers should make every effort to keep their animals out of the mud and manure by building concrete flooring or providing wood pallets for animals to stand on," said Dr. Bethany Bradford, director of veterinary services for the D.O.A.

To neutralize the ammonia, Dr. Bradford recommends using white lime -- which can be purchased from any concrete supplier and can be spread directly onto wet areas to control the ammonia.

Farmers are being asked to contact D.O.A. Division of Veterinary Services about using deworming medications effectively to reduce worm infestations.

For more information, call the Division of Veterinary Services on St. Croix at 340- 778-0998 ext. 252 and 241, and on St. Thomas at 340-774-5182 and St. John 340-776-6274.