



African horsesickness

B.J. ERASMUS

Deltamune (Pty) Ltd., P.O. Box 14167, Lyttelton, 0140 South Africa

ABSTRACT

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African horsesickness (AHS) played a major role in the history and development of southern Africa, both in times of peace and of war. Frequent epidemics of AHS resulted in major transportation impediments.

The viral (filterable) nature of the aetiological agent was proven in 1900 by Sir John M'Fadyean in London, making it one of the first animal diseases for which this had been demonstrated. Similarly, the cultivation of AHS virus in the brain of mice and its subsequent attenuation were also amongst the first such feats for animal viruses. Interestingly, both milestones followed the initial work of Max Theiler (son of Sir Arnold) with yellow fever virus.

The role of *Culicoides* midges as vectors of bluetongue and AHS viruses by Rene du Toit in 1944 was another first, adding a neglected group of insects to the list of insect viral vectors.

Despite the pioneering work of many workers at Onderstepoort, several challenges exist (such as an absolutely safe and efficacious vaccine). It is trusted that a combination of resolute researchers and powerful new technology should soon solve most outstanding problems.
