

Jan 1st, 12:00 AM

## 02. Animal Science

Northeastern State University

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Northeastern State University, "02. Animal Science" (2015). *Oklahoma Research Day Abstracts*. 1.  
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## **Abstracts from the 2015 Oklahoma Research Day**

### **Held at Northeastern State University**

#### **05. Mathematics and Science**

#### **02. Animal Science**

##### **05.02.01 Investigation of Rickettsia rickettsii infections in Northeastern Oklahoma Dogs**

**Adam, Clark** *Northeastern State University*

**Dianne, Kirk** *Northeastern State University*

**Sallie, Ruskoski** *Northeastern State University*

The bacteria *Rickettsia rickettsia* is responsible for causing Rocky Mountain spotted fever (RMSF) in infected mammals. The American dog tick, Rocky Mountain wood tick, and Brown dog tick are the primary hosts and transfers the bacterium to a secondary host, such as dogs, during feeding. The purpose of this study was to investigate exposure to *R. rickettsii* in Northeast Oklahoma dogs currently exhibiting tick-borne disease symptoms, such as fever, lethargy, anorexia, and depression. Blood was collected from 26 dogs exhibiting tick-borne disease symptoms between September and December 2014 at a local veterinary hospital. Sera were tested for antibodies to *R. rickettsii* using an indirect immunofluorescent antibody (IgG) assay. EDTA-treated whole blood was obtained from all animals that tested positive for the antibody and end-point polymerase chain reaction (PCR) was employed to confirm the presence of the organism. Antibody testing revealed that 17 (65%) dogs had positive titers to *R. rickettsii*. Positive samples were evaluated by PCR to confirm the presence of *Rickettsia* spp. However, only 11 (65%) samples tested positive for the *Rickettsia* spp. spotted fever group *ompA* gene. These data conclude that while symptomatic dogs may test positive for antibodies to *R. rickettsii*, it doesn't necessary mean that they are currently infected with rickettsial bacteria.