

VETERANS CORNER

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VA to Review Possible Connections Between Toxic Exposures and Acute Leukemia, Chronic Leukemia, and Multiple Myeloma

The Department of Veterans Affairs announced that it will conduct a scientific review to determine whether there is a relationship between three conditions — acute leukemias, chronic leukemias, and multiple myeloma outside of the head and neck — and toxic exposures for service members who deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, Somalia, Djibouti, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, Uzbekistan, and the entire Southwest Asia theater of operations.

This scientific review will help VA determine whether these conditions become presumptive conditions for veterans. When a condition is considered presumptive, eligible veterans do not need to prove that their service caused their disease to receive benefits for it; instead, VA automatically assumes service-connection for the disease and provides benefits accordingly.

This review is a part of efforts to expand benefits and services for toxic-exposed veterans and their families. These three conditions will go through VA's new and improved process for establishing presumptive conditions, which was codified by signing of the PACT Act — the largest expansion of veteran care and benefits in generations. This process considers all available science and data — including veteran claims data — to establish new presumptives, when appropriate, for veterans as quickly as possible.

"We won't rest until we understand whether there's a connection between these deadly conditions and the service of our nation's heroes," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough. "But make no mistake: veterans shouldn't wait for this review process to conclude to apply for the support they deserve. If you're a veteran living with acute leukemia, chronic leukemia, or multiple myeloma, don't wait — apply for your VA care and benefits today."

Although these conditions are not yet considered presumptive, it's important to note that VA does not require a condition or location to be presumptive to grant benefits for it. When a veteran applies for benefits (in the absence of a presumptive condition), VA considers their claim on a case-by-case basis and grants disability compensation benefits if sufficient evidence shows the veteran has a disability related to their military service. VA encourages veterans who live with these conditions to apply for VA health care and benefits today.

Cancers of the head and neck are already considered presumptive under the PACT Act, so this research will focus solely on acute leukemias, chronic leukemias, and multiple myeloma originating outside of the head and neck.

These conditions were chosen for scientific review based on existing scientific data and close consultations with veterans, Veteran Service Organizations, Congress, and other key stakeholders. While these are the first conditions to be announced for scientific review since the PACT Act passed into law, VA will review many additional conditions moving forward.

In addition to codifying the new presumptive review process, the PACT Act added presumptives for more than 20 presumptive disease categories. Since the PACT Act was signed into law on Aug. 10, VA has delivered more than \$1.6 billion in PACT Act-related benefits to veterans and their survivors. Additionally:

VA is soliciting public comment about this decision via the Federal Register. The public will have a 30-day period to provide comments.

VA encourages all eligible veterans and survivors to file a claim — or submit their intent to file a claim — for PACT Act-related benefits now. Veterans who do so on or before Aug. 9 may have their benefits, if granted, backdated to Aug. 10, 2022.

For more information about the PACT Act and a full list of presumptive conditions covered under the law, visit [VA.gov/PACT](https://va.gov/PACT).

AG LINE

By Christine Gelley

Agriculture and Natural
Resources Educator,
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OSU Visits Long Ridge Energy

By Gwynn Stewart

Community Development
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Tour participants stand in front of the Long Ridge Energy Generation Facility. Purified water evaporates behind them after powering a

The diversity of Ohio's energy portfolio continues to broaden the horizons for ways to power our daily lives. Understanding how energy is produced, used, and accessed is something that we at Noble County OSU Extension are routinely learning about. Both our educators that focus on Community Development and Agriculture and Natural Resources are members of the OSU Extension Energy Outreach Group.

For our July 25 meeting, staff from The Ohio State University visited the Long Ridge Energy Generation Facility in Monroe County, Ohio. The Long Ridge Energy Generation Facility is "one of the most energy efficient power plants of any type in the world, with capacity to deliver 485 megawatts into the PJM grid. It provides long-term, low-cost power to energy users in the region." (from www.longridgeenergy.com)

It was explained during the tour that the power plant functions like a jet engine, except powered with natural gas as the fuel. The plant is built on the former Omet aluminum manufacturing plant along the Ohio River. While the owners of Omet attempted an on-site electric plant previously, there wasn't enough land to accommodate one.

Now, with the advent of in-line combined cycle processes

steam generator that works in combination with the turbine engine to increase the plant's electrical generation efficiency.

that make the plant's overall size much smaller, it essentially fit into 25-acre footprint. The former Omet water tank still stands (with its rust) close in proximity to the towers of the new natural gas generation facility that has the capacity to power up to 210,000 homes.

The plant went into operation in October 2021 and employs 23 full-time staff. It was the first in the world to burn natural gas and hydrogen (at a 5% hydrogen and 95% natural gas mix) when the concept was tested last April on Earth Day. However, the market for the combined product is still developing. Access to affordable and plentiful hydrogen stock and a market for the higher-cost end-use power are still needed for hydrogen to be employed for consistent utility or private power usage.

The OSU Extension Energy Outreach Program (OSUEEP) and the Energize Ohio OSU Extension Signature Program, both are a source for non-biased, research-based information addressing Ohio's evolving energy landscape and critical energy issues impacting Ohioans. The OSUEEP team meets monthly to discuss ongoing energy trends, programming, and learn from invited guest speakers who present on current energy issues impacting Ohio. It is co-led by Extension Educators

Front row (left) Catelyn Turner, Agriculture & Natural Resources (ANR) Educator — Monroe Co.; Erika Lyon, ANR Educator, Har-

Dan Lima (Agriculture & Natural Resources — Belmont Co.) and Gwynn Stewart (Community Development — Noble Co.).

Learn more about OSUEEP at energizeohio.osu.edu. The energy library there has a wide variety of energy programs and resources including fact sheets, bulletins, and videos to reference. A searchable database of energy efficiency and renewable energy incentives can also be filtered to meet individual needs.

The tour broadened our knowledge base of emerging energy production resources. As a result we gained additional understanding of how they fit into the big picture of meeting our state and nation's growing power needs, while remaining environmentally conscious of the impacts this development creates.

Upcoming Events

The Caldwell Community Seed Library Program will host their next meeting from 1:30-3:00 p.m. on Tuesday, August 8 for our Garden Party at the Noble County Extension Office. Those who have attended programs with us all summer and those who choose to come just once, are all eligible for Seed Library Participation Prizes! Bring veggies from your garden to share and let's celebrate the beginning of harvest season! RSVP by calling 740-732-

5681 or emailing gelley.2@osu.edu. The Caldwell Community Seed Library is a partnered program with the Caldwell Public Library, the Jon N. Bates Memorial Little Free Library, and the Samaritan House to provide free access to seeds, gardening education, and ideas for ways to use fresh garden produce in your meals. Don't forget that we would love to see photos of your garden growth progress in the Caldwell Community Seed Library Facebook group! Here we share gardening information and adventures with others and ask questions in a social environment. Come join us: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/caldwellcommunityseedlibrary>. Join the Ohio Forage and Grasslands Council for an evening pasture walk featuring weed management information for today's grazing managers from 6-8 p.m. on Thursday, August 10 at the Eastern Agricultural Research Station (16870 Bond Ridge Rd. Caldwell). Topics featured include: The Role of Drones for Weed Control, Herbicide Selection Criteria, Grazing for Weed Suppression, Ohio State Research Updates. Registration is \$20 per person and includes a boxed dinner. RSVPs are appreciated by August 7. Visit <https://ohioforage.com/event/pasture-weed-management-clinic/> to register.