

Horse in Glenn County infected with West Nile virus

Staff Reports (ChicoER.com)

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ORLAND — A horse that contracted the mosquito-borne disease West Nile virus is not expected to survive, the Glenn County Health Services/Public Health Office reported Wednesday.

West Nile virus kills between a third and half of all horses it infects, according to a news release from the office.

The infected horse, which was being kept just northwest of Orland, had not been vaccinated against West Nile.

"This is an unfortunate reminder that citizens must take action to protect their animals," Glenn County Sheriff Larry Jones was quoted as saying in the release. Jones oversees Animal Control Services.

One vaccination does not protect a horse from West Nile, the release said. Maximum protection can only be obtained with two separate vaccinations, three to four weeks apart.

"Owners of equine animals, which include horses, donkeys and mules, are urged to contact their local veterinarians for more information," the release stated.

"West Nile virus is more prevalent this season than last year, and it is important that residents take action now to protect themselves and their family members, Glenn County health director Scott Gruendl was quoted as saying in the news release.

Jack Cavier, manager of the Glenn County Mosquito and Vector Control District, advised residents to drain any standing water on their property, avoid being outside at dawn and dusk, wear long-sleeved shirts and long pants when mosquitoes are active, and use repellent.

In Butte County, three groups of mosquitoes that had been caught in traps tested positive for West Nile, the Butte County Mosquito and Vector Control District reported in a news release Wednesday.

Two of the positive groups (which are known as pools) were collected from Richvale, and the third was collected from Hamilton City.

According to the Butte and Glenn districts, West Nile virus activity is much greater this year than last year.

So far this year statewide there have been nine human cases compared to seven at this time last year, and 746 positive mosquito pools compared to 271 last year. This year, 493 birds killed by West Nile have been found compared to 88 at this point last year.

The infected horse near Orland was the state's third equine case so far this year. The others were in Stanislaus and San Joaquin counties. The horse that got sick in Glenn County was the first infected horse there in nearly eight years.

West Nile virus is usually prevalent from May through October, when mosquitoes are most abundant. Mosquitoes contract the virus when they feed on infected birds. They spread the virus when they seek other hosts to bite.

Both the Butte and Glenn county districts have begun spraying pesticides in some populated areas to kill adult mosquitoes.

The public is asked to help with West Nile surveillance by reporting dead birds they encounter. Reports may be made by calling 1-877-968-2473 or going online at www.westnile.ca.gov.