



**Public Health Administration**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
**June 1, 2016**

**16-02-O**

***Horses at Risk for West Nile Virus***

BUTTE COUNTY, Calif. – Horse owners are urged to vaccinate horses for West Nile Virus (WNV), a mosquito borne illness transmitted to animals and people through the bite of an infected mosquito.

Horses are at higher risk for WNV because they spend most of their time outdoors, including dusk and dawn, when mosquitos capable of transmitting WNV are most active. Horses pasture in areas near standing water where mosquitos breed, including: ponds, troughs and irrigation run-off.

Annual WNV vaccination is recommended for horses, ideally, prior to mosquito season. WNV season runs May through October. Last year Butte County experienced higher numbers of mosquitoes infected with WNV than previously seen. This year the rate of WNV is expected to be significant. Several vaccines are available for horses, check with your veterinarian to discuss the best option for your horse. For a list of local veterinarians, visit: [www.buttecounty.net/ph/animals/rabies\\_wildlife/localveterinarian](http://www.buttecounty.net/ph/animals/rabies_wildlife/localveterinarian)

“WNV can cause serious health risk for horses, including inflammation of the brain, which can be fatal. The vaccination is quick and simple” explains Dr.Laura Cooper, Doctor of Veterinarian Medicine in Oroville.

WNV may cause a wide range of symptoms for horses, including those that mimic other serious neurological illness such as rabies, equine herpes virus and central nerve damage. Consult a veterinarian if your horse exhibits any of the following symptoms:

- Stumbling or lack of coordination
- Drooping lips, lip smacking or teeth grinding
- General weakness, muscle twitching and/or tremors
- Sensitivity to touch or sound
- Fever
- Difficulty rising or inability to rise
- Convulsions or coma

In addition to vaccination, horse owners can take steps to prevent WNV. DECREASE the likelihood of WNV infection by taking steps to reduce mosquitos on your property, including: draining standing water, eliminating piles of decaying organic matter such as leaves, lawn clippings and manure, and cooperating with local vector control when fogging measures are taken. REDUCE exposing horses to WNV by protecting them during peak mosquito feeding hours (dusk and dawn), applying mosquito repellent containing permethrin in the evening, and circulating air in barns by using fans.

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For further information regarding this release, contact Lisa Almaguer, BCPHD Communications Manager.  
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