



12-21-O

For Immediate Release
September 17, 2012

www.buttecounty.net/publichealth

PREVENT WEST NILE VIRUS IN HORSES

Phone:

(530) 895-6565- Chico
(530) 538-7583- Oroville

Fax:

(530) 891-2873- Chico
(530) 538-2164- Oroville

Mailing Address:

695 Oleander Avenue
Chico, CA 95926

202 Mira Loma Drive
Oroville, CA 95965

BUTTE COUNTY, Calif. — Butte County Public Health Department urges horse owners to vaccinate their horses as soon as possible against West Nile Virus (WNV). West Nile Virus is a significant health threat to horses. Vaccination against WNV prior to, or during, mosquito season can help protect your horse.

WNV is a mosquito-borne disease that can cause illness ranging from mild, flu-like illness to severe illness involving inflammation (swelling) of the brain. Up to 4 of every 10 horses infected with WNV will become ill and of those horses that become ill with WNV, 30 to 40 percent will die or be euthanized due to the severity of their illness. Once recovered, up to 17% of infected horses show long term effects 6 months later, including gait and behavioral abnormalities. Currently, there is no specific treatment for WNV; therefore vaccination of horses is considered essential.

“We are seeing increased numbers of WNV infections this year, in both people and horses,” stated Phyllis Murdock, Director of Butte County Public Health. “If you have not yet vaccinated your horse this year, it is not too late. Contact your veterinarian right away.”

There are currently four approved WNV vaccines available for horses. Every vaccination requires a yearly booster to continue to protect your horse. The best time to have your horse vaccinated is early spring, but vaccination can still provide significant protection if done later in the year. Fortunately, WNV is not transmitted from horse to horse or horse to human.

Other control measures recommended for decreasing the risk of WNV infection include:

Reducing Mosquito Numbers

- Eliminate stagnant or standing water by draining ponds, avoiding water overflow from troughs, and reducing run-off and pooling of irrigation water;
- Eliminate accumulated water in buckets, wheelbarrows, flower pot saucers, old tires and other areas in which water can collect;
- Stock ponds, troughs, fountains and other areas of standing water with mosquito fish or add mosquito dunks to kill mosquito larvae;

PREVENT WEST NILE VIRUS IN HORSES – 2

- Eliminate piles of decaying organic matter such as leaves, lawn clippings and manure; and
- Cooperate with local Mosquito Control Districts as they institute spraying and other mosquito control measures.

Reduce Exposure of Horses to Infected Mosquitoes

- Keep horses in a barn from dawn to dusk (the time of peak mosquito feeding activity)
- Use fans, flysheets, and insecticide misting systems to deter mosquitoes
- Apply mosquito repellants approved for use in horses, particularly in the evening.

Symptoms of West Nile Virus infection in horses may mimic other neurological diseases such as rabies, equine herpes virus and other equine viral diseases. **Consult your veterinarian if your horse exhibits any of the following signs:**

- Stumbling or incoordination, especially in rear limbs
- Drooping lips, lip smacking, grinding teeth
- Generalized weakness
- Muscle twitching, tremors
- Head drooping, lethargy, and unresponsiveness
- Grinding teeth
- Hypersensitivity to touch or sound
- Fever
- Difficulty rising, recumbency (inability to rise)
- Convulsions, coma

For further information on West Nile Virus and horses, visit the following websites.

General information:

http://www.cdffa.ca.gov/ahfss/animal_health/wnv_info.html

http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/qa/wnv_horses.htm

Surveillance:

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/vs/nahss/equine/wnv/>

###

For further information, contact: Linda Haller, Program Manager, Animal Control
Telephone: (530) 538-7409 or E-mail: lhaller@buttecounty.net

Butte County Public Health Department

Our Mission: To protect the public through promoting individual, community and environmental health.