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West Nile Virus News

WEST NILE DISEASE

West Nile disease arrived in the Rogue Valley in the fall of 2004 and through the year 2005 and beyond is considered endemic. The Rogue Valley was one of the last areas in the continental United States to be affected by the virus, which is carried by infected migrating birds. Since its appearance in New York in 1999, West Nile virus has become the fastest-growing health threat to horses in the United States. Of interest however is the fact that reported cases of WNV infection in horses has declined much due in fact to vaccination.

Horses become infected with West Nile virus when they are bitten by mosquitoes that have recently bitten infected birds. Horses and humans become infected in this way, but cannot transmit the disease directly to other individuals by contact, or by mosquito vector. Only birds develop enough of the virus in their blood stream to allow mosquitoes to transmit the disease after a blood meal. Horses and humans are termed 'dead end hosts' because of this.

Some horses show no symptoms after becoming infected, others, especially the very young and very old, become clinically ill. Symptoms of West Nile infection usually appear within 5 to 15 days and include: stumbling or tripping, muscle weakness or twitching, partial paralysis, loss of appetite, depression, head pressing or head tilt, impaired vision, wandering or circling, inability to swallow, inability to stand up, fever, convulsions, and coma. These signs are caused by the viruses effect on the brain and spinal cord.

Treatment for West Nile infection primarily involves supportive care, since no specific therapy currently exists. With supportive care, most clinically affected horses survive infection, but approximately 35% die of the disease or have to be euthanized.

Vaccination is effective in preventing the disease, and is strongly recommended in this area. All horses should receive an initial series of vaccinations, followed by yearly boosters. Please consult our West Nile Vaccination Update page to get the latest recommendations on vaccination. Our current recommendation is to vaccinate annually in April. If you vaccinate your horse earlier or later than April, twice yearly vaccination is recommended.

To further protect your horse, and yourself, practice mosquito control around your property. Eliminate common mosquito breeding areas by draining shallow ponds or placing special chemicals in them to suppress larvae development (these are environmentally safe and available through farm supply stores and Jackson County Vector Control). Look for and eliminate any places water can collect and become stagnant. Clean water troughs once a week.. Keep your horses stabled in screened stalls at dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active. Turn off lights that attract mosquitoes at night or use fluorescent lights which do not attract mosquitoes. Use mosquito repellent.

Please follow the links below for more information, including a map of confirmed and pending cases in United States..

[Maps \(USGS\):](#)

http://cindi.usgs.gov/hazard/event/west_nile/west_nile.html

Emergency Management Warnings (USDA):

<http://www.aphis.usda.gov/lpa/issues/wnv/wnv.html>

Jackson County Vector Control:

<http://www.jacksoncountyvectorcontrol.org/>

West Nile virus Identified in Jackson County

Today, the Jackson County Health Department was notified by Oregon State University, Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory that mosquitoes collected earlier this week by Jackson County Vector Control in the Central Point area tested positive for West Nile virus. This activity was expected as West Nile has been active in Jackson County the last few years. This is the second mosquito pool identified in the State of Oregon in 2008, with the first one identified in Baker County, Oregon.

This is the first West Nile virus activity observed in Jackson County in 2008.

Jackson County Vector Control District has an ongoing surveillance program for West Nile virus and other mosquito borne diseases. They routinely sample mosquitoes and dead birds and have 4 flocks of chickens that are used as "sentinels" for mosquito borne diseases such as West Nile.

With the re-emergence of West Nile virus, it is even more important to reduce mosquito-breeding opportunities and to protect ourselves and our families from mosquito bites.

Malheur County has Oregon's first human West Nile cases of 2008

The first human cases of West Nile fever in Oregon this year have been reported in Malheur County.

State health officials say the appearance of the cases should be a reminder to avoid mosquito bites – particularly with outside activities during the coming Labor Day weekend.

Malheur County health officials say three people were reported during the last week of July to be infected. All are recovering. Malheur County is a well-known hot-spot for West Nile activity.

Emilio DeBess, an epidemiologist with the Oregon Department of Human Services State Public Health Division, said the cases should alert Oregonians to the need for precautions against the virus, which is transmitted to humans by mosquitoes.

Most infections are mild, with fever and flu-like symptoms but severe infections may cause inflammation of the brain and, rarely, death.

DeBess said health officials encourage people who have West Nile symptoms to see their doctors for testing and follow-up care.

In 2007 Oregon recorded 27 human cases of West Nile virus, with two cases acquired by Oregonians who became infected in other states.

Most of the human cases in 2007 occurred in eastern Oregon, with 12 cases originating in Malheur County.

West Nile virus is transmitted to people by mosquitoes. Birds are the principal carriers of the virus. Infected birds are bitten by mosquitoes, which pick up the virus and carry it to people.

WNV Prevention Advice

Use insect repellents containing DEET, picaridin, oil of lemon, eucalyptus, or IR3535.

Avoid being outdoors when mosquitoes are most active.

Wear long sleeve shirts, long pants, and a hat to reduce bites.

Check screen doors and windows for openings that might allow mosquitoes indoors.

Decrease standing water to the greatest extent possible, particularly around the home.

Please visit our website for information at <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/ph/acd/diseases/wnile/survey.shtml>

