



*To Protect and Promote the Health and the Environment of the People of Kittitas County*

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**Date:** July 31, 2009

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## West Nile virus confirmed in Kittitas County horse

West Nile virus (WNV), a potentially fatal disease in equines, has been confirmed today in one horse in Kittitas County by Washington Animal Disease Diagnostic Laboratory and Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA). The horse was one year old and was not vaccinated for WNV. It resided near Ellensburg before it was euthanized due to the illness. The horse had traveled to Othello to pasture recently but returned to Kittitas County two weeks ago.

This is the first confirmed case of a horse contracting West Nile virus in Kittitas County in 2009. Throughout the state, West Nile virus infections have been identified in three horses, one bird, and 126 mosquito samples as of July 31, 2009. There have been no identified West Nile human infection cases in Washington State this year. In 2008, one horse in Cle Elum contracted the illness and was euthanized, and 41 horses were confirmed with the illness statewide.

Most horses do not become ill and will show no symptoms. If symptoms are displayed they may include loss of appetite, loss of coordination, confusion, fever, stiffness, muscle tremors, and muscles weakness (especially in the hindquarters). About one-third of all horses that become ill will die (WSDA).

West Nile virus may also be spread by the bite of an infected mosquito to people. Kittitas County Public Health Department Environmental Health Specialists are collecting and testing mosquitoes for WNV and will continue to do so through August 31 as recommended by Washington State Department of Health. No mosquito samples from Kittitas County have tested for WNV this year. Certain types of dead birds can also be tested for WNV. If you find a raven, magpie, jay, crow or hawk, you can report it to the Kittitas County Public Health Department at (509) 962-7589 or use the online dead bird submission form at <http://www.co.kittitas.wa.us/health/vector.asp>.

Most people who are infected with WNV will show no symptoms. Individuals over 50 years of age have the highest risk of becoming seriously ill from WNV. Symptoms include neck stiffness, convulsions, muscle weakness, and paralysis.

### For more information:

- Contact Kittitas County Public Health Department at (509) 962-7515.
- Future positive WNV samples will be posted on the DOH website: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/Zoo/WNV/WNV.html>.
- More information about WNV can be found at the CDC website: <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvbid/westnile/index.htm>.

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