

Date: August 18, 2009

Second horse with West Nile virus confirmed in Kittitas County

West Nile virus (WNV), a potentially fatal disease in equines, has been confirmed in a second Kittitas County horse this year. The first horse was confirmed with the illness on July 31. The most recent case was an eleven year old mare that was not vaccinated for WNV. It resided in Ellensburg before it was euthanized due to the illness.

WNV is an illness spread by the bite of an infected mosquito that can affect certain types of birds, horses, and humans. This year, as of today, West Nile virus infections have been identified in 12 horses, seven birds, and 206 mosquito samples throughout the state. There have been no identified human infections of WNV in Washington State this year. The best way to prevent WNV infection in horses is to vaccinate them against the illness. There is no vaccine for people, so prevention is focused on avoidance of mosquito bites by using mosquito repellent and limiting time spent outdoors when mosquitoes are most active (at dusk and dawn).

Most horses infected with WNV 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). According to the Washington State Department of Agriculture, about one-third of all horses that become ill will die.

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

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 positively 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>.

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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