

NEWS RELEASE

October 2, 2023

For Immediate Release

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West Nile Virus Positive Cases

A second case of West Nile Virus in a horse has been reported to Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) from the nine-county health district. Several additional cases of West Nile Virus in humans have been identified as well - 10 confirmed cases with symptoms and 2 asymptomatic cases identified in blood donors, bringing the total for this year to 15.

“Some of these individuals became infected while traveling in Colorado, which is also seeing a severe West Nile Virus season along with Nebraska,” stated Sarah Minnick, Program Manager at SWNPHD. “Thankfully the weather is cooling down; however, until there is a hard freeze, mosquitoes are still present in southwest Nebraska and may potentially be carrying West Nile Virus.”

SWNPHD encourages all horse owners to vaccinate their horses against West Nile Virus. West Nile Virus (WNV) is transmitted to horses through the bite of an infected mosquito. Horses cannot transmit WNV to other horses, birds, or people.

Per the Nebraska Department of Agriculture, the signs and symptoms of West Nile Virus in horses include loss of appetite, depression, fever, quivering muscles, and weakness of limbs. Infected horses may or may not show symptoms.

While there is no specific treatment for horses infected with WNV, the following tips can be used to help prevent infections:

- Vaccinate horses in the spring for WNV.
- House horses indoors during dawn and dusk when mosquitoes are most active.
- Avoid turning on lights in the barn and use incandescent bulbs around the perimeter of the stable.
- Use fans to help deter mosquitoes.
- Use sprays containing mosquito repellents that are available for horses. Read product labels prior to use.
- Check your property for containers that may have standing water such as old tires, buckets, or tubs. Drill holes in unused barrels or buckets that are stored outside to help drain standing water.
- Use mosquito dunks in standing water that cannot be drained, such as birdbaths, ponds, troughs, or other water sources. These products are safe for animals, birds, fish, and people.

Vaccination is the best practice to prevent West Nile Virus in horses. Owners should contact their veterinarian for additional information.

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. You can follow us on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and TikTok or view the website at www.swhealth.ne.gov which contains many resources and additional information helpful to prevent disease, promote and protect health. Call (308) 345-4223; one number three locations, McCook, Imperial, and Ogallala.

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