



John R. Kasich | Governor

Department of  
Agriculture

David T. Daniels | Director

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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**WEST NILE VIRUS CONFIRMED IN OHIO HORSES**

***Diseases spread by mosquitoes are preventable in horses with proper vaccination***

(REYNOLDSBURG, OH) – The Ohio Department of Agriculture today confirmed the first positive cases of West Nile Virus (WNV) in Ohio horses for 2017. Multiple cases in different parts of the state have been reported. The horses confirmed to have contracted WNV had not been vaccinated. The spread of WNV in horses is preventable with proper vaccination and horse owners are urged to ensure their animal's vaccine and boosters are up to date.

West Nile Virus is transmitted to horses via bites from infected mosquitoes. Clinical signs for WNV include flulike symptoms, where the horse seems mildly anorexic and depressed. Changes in mentality, drowsiness, driving or pushing forward (often without control) and asymmetrical weakness may be observed. Mortality rate from WNV can be as high as 30-40 percent in horses. Infection with WNV does not always lead to signs of illness in people or animals. WNV is endemic in the United States and Ohio has reported positive cases in horses each of the last few years.

The WNV cases follow the Ohio Department of Agriculture's report of eastern equine encephalitis (EEE) in an Ashtabula County horse on August 24, 2017. Both illnesses have presented in animals that were not vaccinated against the disease and lived near areas that are typically prone to harboring mosquitoes.

"These cases should serve as an alert to all horse owners to vaccinate their animals against West Nile Virus and eastern equine encephalitis," said State Veterinarian Dr. Tony Forshey. "Vaccines are a proven and effective prevention tool and I encourage all owners to talk to their local vet for options and advice on how to keep their animals healthy."

In addition to vaccinations, horse owners also should work to reduce the mosquito population and eliminate possible breeding areas. Recommendations include: removing stagnant water sources; keeping animals inside during the bugs' feeding times, which are typically early in the morning and evening; and using mosquito repellents.

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Media Contact: ODA Communications, 614-752-9817, [communications@agri.ohio.gov](mailto:communications@agri.ohio.gov)



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