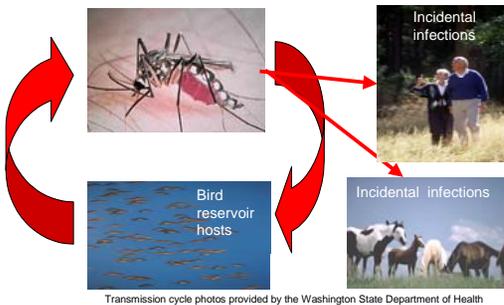


# West Nile Virus: Protecting Your Horses

## West Nile Virus

West Nile virus (WNV) is a mosquito-borne virus that was first detected in the United States in 1999. It has steadily moved west, and late in 2002 the disease was confirmed in 2 birds and 2 horses in Washington State.

## Transmission Cycle



Mosquitoes become infected by feeding on infected birds and pass the virus to other birds, animals, and people. Both horses and people are considered “dead-end” hosts, meaning that while infected, they do not spread the infection. Infected horses are not a risk to other horses.

Central Washington Animal Agriculture Team

Fact Sheet # 1012-2004



## Signs in Horses

West Nile virus should be considered a serious threat. The virus normally causes mild symptoms, but it can cause encephalitis, an inflammation of the brain and central nervous system.

Signs may include:

- ◆ Weakness of limbs, difficulty in walking, stumbling, knuckling over, falling, the inability to stand, or convulsions
- ◆ Muscle twitching, typically on the face, neck & forelimbs
- ◆ Hypersensitivity
- ◆ Head tilt, drooling

Death occurs in about 30% of clinically affected equine. Most surviving animals recover completely, but some may show lasting neurological effects.

***\*Horses showing any suspicious signs should be evaluated by a veterinarian for an accurate diagnosis.***



Photo by Phil Snow,  
College of Veterinary Medicine,  
University of Tennessee



Photo by Maureen T. Long,  
College of Veterinary Medicine,  
University of Florida

## Vaccinate Equine

There are licensed vaccines to protect horses, mules, donkeys and other equine against West Nile virus. Vaccinations are the primary protection for this serious disease.

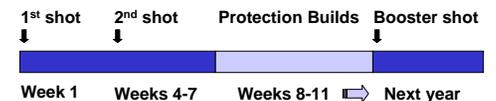
The vaccinations require two doses, four to seven weeks apart. Depending on the vaccine used, immunity may not be achieved for at least eight weeks after the second dose.



Photo by Dr. Darien Feary, Colorado State University

The vaccination process should begin in the Spring during the early part of the mosquito season. Work with your veterinarian to develop the best plan for your horse or equine.

### West Nile virus Equine Vaccine



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