



CLINICAL SIGNS OF WEST NILE IN HORSES

- Muscle weakness or twitching, especially of muzzle and face
- Stumbling or tripping
- Partial paralysis, usually involving the hind limbs
- Loss of appetite
- Depression/lethargy
- Head pressing/tilt
- Impaired vision
- Wandering or circling
- Inability to swallow
- Inability to stand up
- Low-grade fever
- Convulsions
- Coma/death



MORE INFORMATION

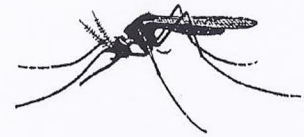
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Website –
www.cdc.gov/westnile/
- Pennsylvania West Nile Virus Surveillance Program –
www.westnile.state.pa.us/
- Equine West Nile Virus Vaccine: Information and Statistics –
www.equinewestnile.com/

Information for this brochure was obtained by Dr. Tim Van Grouw from the websites listed above and from communication with the manufacturer of the equine vaccine on September 12, 2002.

Brochure updated: July 2003



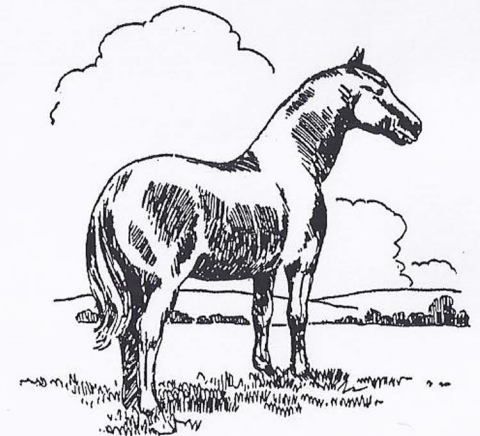
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WEST NILE VIRUS

– AND –

YOUR HORSE



THE DISEASE

What is West Nile encephalitis?

West Nile encephalitis is an inflammation of the brain and spinal cord caused by a virus. The virus affects birds and animals, most notably people, horses, mules, and donkeys.

How is West Nile virus spread?

The virus is spread between birds and horses via the mosquito. In Pennsylvania, equine infections are most likely in the late summer and early fall, although they can occur at any time when mosquitoes are active. An infected horse can not transmit the virus to another horse or person.

How serious is an infection?

While West Nile encephalitis is not common, it can be fatal. About 40% of horses die or are euthanized after showing signs of the disease.

Is there any specific treatment?

There is no effective cure. Veterinary care includes intravenous fluids and drugs to relieve some of the clinical signs of the disease. Therapy is costly and sometimes unrewarding.

Can I limit my horse's exposure to West Nile virus?

Keep your horse stabled during dawn and dusk hours, the time when mosquitoes are most active. Apply insect repellants that contain permethrins. Since these repellants are

inactivated over time in direct sunlight, reapply according to directions on the label. Use fluorescent lighting; mosquitoes are especially attracted to yellow, incandescent bulbs. Eliminate the moist areas where mosquitoes breed: stagnant water in wading pools, clogged roof gutters, wheelbarrows, bird baths, and old tires.



THE VACCINE

Is there an effective vaccine?

Yes. A vaccine has been approved by the Food & Drug Administration (FDA). The manufacturer of the vaccine has completed studies that show their product to be 95% effective in preventing West Nile infections one year after vaccination. In real life, the reported failure rate of the vaccine is about six per one million doses. (That means about 6 out of 1,000,000 horses that are vaccinated may still develop West Nile encephalitis). Eastern and Western encephalitis vaccines provide no protection against West Nile virus.

How is the vaccine given?

Initially, a 1-mL dose is given in the muscle, followed by a booster 3-6 weeks later. After this two-dose series, the vaccine should be boosted annually, ideally one month before mosquitoes are active in your area.

Is the vaccine safe in pregnant mares?

No adverse reactions were reported in hundreds of pregnant mares vaccinated during the Florida outbreaks of West Nile virus in 2001. Since then, mares have been vaccinated all over the U.S. with no ill effect on foal or dam.

Can I vaccinate my foal?

If the foal's dam was vaccinated for West Nile, vaccinate the foal at 3-4 months of age. If the dam was not vaccinated for West Nile, vaccinate the foal at 6-8 weeks of age.

When is my horse considered immune?

Four weeks after the booster dose.

Is the vaccine safe in other equidae?

West Nile vaccine is safely used in donkeys, mules, and miniature horses.

Should I vaccinate my horses if West Nile virus is found in my area?

You should vaccinate due to the fatal nature of the disease. Vaccination can hasten clinical signs if a horse is already infected with West Nile virus.

Should I administer West Nile vaccine at a different time from other vaccines?

There is no evidence of decreased efficacy when West Nile vaccine is given at the same time as other vaccines.

Can I sell a vaccinated horse?

Yes. The vaccine does not interfere with the newest tests. Therefore, most import/export bans have been lifted.