

Linn County

Department of Health Services

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“Working together to promote the health and well-being of all Linn County residents.”

August 26, 2004

For Immediate Release:

Linn County horse tests positive for West Nile Virus

The Oregon Department of Agriculture announced today that a Linn County horse has tested positive for West Nile Virus. “The horse is reported to be recovering well,” says Dr. Don Hansen, State Veterinarian. However, in recent weeks, there have been positive tests on birds found in Malheur County (eastern Oregon) and Josephine and Jackson Counties (southern Oregon.)

“It is important to note that the virus is passed by mosquitoes, not by horse-to-horse, or horse-to-human contact,” says Dr. Don Hansen, State Veterinarian.

Dr. Hansen urges that horses need to be vaccinated. This vaccination requires two doses : an initial dose and a booster dose 21 days later. If the horse has already been vaccinated with both doses consult the veterinarian about the need for a booster at this time. If the horse has not been vaccinated , have the horse vaccinated now.

West Nile Virus is an infection that lives in birds. It is spread when a mosquito feeds on an infected bird and then bites a human or horse. Humans can only get the virus from the bite of an infected mosquito; the disease does not spread from other animals to humans, or from person to person. The mosquito does not transfer West Nile virus from an infected mammal to humans.

Eighty to ninety percent of cases result in no illness or only mild symptoms which include fever, headache and body aches. About 1 in 5 infected may show signs of West Nile fever which is characterized as a fairly sudden onset of fever typically associated with headache, body aches, loss of appetite, fatigue and sometimes nausea and vomiting. The fever syndrome usually lasts 3 to 6 days. The incubation period is usually 3-14 days.

“We’ve been expecting West Nile Virus to appear in Oregon at any time, so this is not a surprise” said Dr. Emilio DeBess, State Public Health Veterinarian in DHS. “This does not necessarily mean that we expect to see human cases any time soon. But, it does mean that people need to be sure that they are taking precautions against mosquitoes.”

The best defense against West Nile Virus is for individuals to protect themselves from mosquito bites, DeBess says. He advises people to take five simple steps:

- Eliminate all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding, for example leaf-clogged gutters, birdbaths, and old tires;
- Avoid mosquito-infested areas at dusk and dawn, when mosquitoes are most active;
- Wear protective clothing such as long pants, long sleeve shirts when you are outdoors;
- Wear insect repellent, preferably one that contains DEET. Follow label directions
- Make sure that doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.

For more information:

- Linn County website at www.co.linn.or.us click on West Nile Virus Resources or http://www.co.linn.or.us/Health/enviro_n_health/eh_wnv.htm
- West Nile Virus public information line: toll free (866) 703-4636 or (866) 703- INFO
- Linn County Environmental Health : (541) 967-3821

Media Contacts:

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