



Immediate Release

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Contact: Tom Womack, Public Affairs (615) 837-5118
or, Dr. Ron Wilson, State Veterinarian (615) 837-5120

42 CASES OF WNV CONFIRMED IN TENNESSEE HORSES

NASHVILLE -- Twenty-four new cases of West Nile Virus (WNV) in Tennessee horses, including the first case in Middle Tennessee, have been confirmed since last week, reported the Tennessee Department of Agriculture. With one case in Putnam County and 23 new cases confirmed in West Tennessee, the number of equine with the virus in the state in 2002 now stands at 42.

Of the 42 cases of equine WNV, 12 died or were euthanized and 12 are alive or recovering. The status of the remaining cases is unknown at this time.

Following is a summary by county of confirmed equine West Nile Virus cases in Tennessee for the year to date: Crockett (1), Dyer (4), Gibson (2), Haywood (3), Henry (2), Jefferson (1), Lauderdale (1), Madison (1), Obion (1), Putnam (1), Shelby (18), Tipton (3) and Weakley (4).

"Horse owners should remain vigilant for signs of the disease and to confer with their local veterinarian so that it can be properly reported and monitored," said Dr. Ron Wilson, State Veterinarian. Wilson says that USDA has conditionally licensed a WNV vaccine for horses, and while its effectiveness is not yet documented, it appears to offer most horses protection from the disease. He recommends horse owners consult their local veterinarian for more information about vaccinating their animals.

According to Wilson, symptoms of the disease in horses include decreased alertness, blindness or impaired vision, aimless wandering, head pressing, circling, inability to swallow and possibly substantial weakness, paralysis and convulsions. While many horses infected with WNV do not develop signs of illness, it can be fatal to those that do become ill.

Because mosquitoes transmit the disease, Wilson suggests that horse owners minimize risks by eliminating sources of standing water or by removing any kind of container where water can collect and serve as a breeding ground for the insect.

TDA's Kord Animal Disease Laboratory in Nashville provides diagnostic services for livestock owners and private veterinarians. For more information about WNV or other viral diseases in horses, contact the State Veterinarian's office and laboratory at (615) 837-5120.

For questions about WNV and human health, the Tennessee Department of Health has a Web page on the topic at <http://www.state.tn.us/health>.

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