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West Nile Virus Confirmed in Utah Horses

Horse Owners Should Contact Veterinarian Immediately if Infection is Suspected

Salt Lake City, UT — As of September 7, 2021, nine cases of West Nile virus (WNV) have been confirmed in horses in Utah this year. Weber County has had seven cases and there has been one case each in Salt Lake and Box Elder counties. At least six humans and seven birds have also tested positive for the disease. The Utah Department of Health has reported the highest number of positive mosquito pools ever seen in Utah.

According to Dr. Dean Taylor, Utah State Veterinarian, “Vaccines against West Nile virus and other neurologic diseases are readily available from your veterinarian. Every owner should discuss vaccinations with their veterinarian in the spring before mosquito season.” Owners can also protect their horses by using insect repellants, fans and screens and eliminating stagnant water sources where mosquitoes breed.

West Nile virus is carried by mosquitoes and can cause disease in humans, birds, horses and some other mammals. Horses become infected with WNV through mosquito bites; unlike many other diseases, infected horses do not spread the infection to other horses or people. Signs of WNV include loss of appetite, depression, fever, and neurologic signs like stumbling, circling and weakness. The disease can cause long-term neurologic problems or even death. Horse owners who suspect WNV should contact their veterinarian immediately.

For more information on WNV in Utah, visit <https://epi.health.utah.gov/west-nile-virus/>.

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