



Guarding Against the West Nile Virus

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Since its entry into the United States in 1999, the West Nile virus has taken a heavy toll on the nation's equine population. Like other similar mosquito-borne diseases, such as Eastern and Western equine encephalitis, horse owners can take precautions to protect their animals against risk of infection.

VACCINATION

•Vaccinate all horses with the available licensed vaccine following the manufacturer's recommendations of two injections 3 weeks to 6 weeks apart followed by an annual booster.

•Complete the series two months before the appearance of mosquitoes in Indiana (usually March 15). Horses need this time to build adequate immunity should they be exposed to the virus. No vaccine is 100 percent effective, but proper use has protected many horses from disease and clinical signs.

•Vaccination more frequently than annual is not indicated, but not prohibited.

Veterinarians and their clients may choose to booster more often within their own veterinarian-client-patient relationship (VCPR).

•Veterinarians may sell vaccine to clients with whom they have a VCPR. A VCPR is valid when the veterinarian is familiar with the animal being treated and assumes responsibility for making judgements about that animal's health.

•The horse owner should verify two doses are available for each animal, as both are necessary to build proper immunity. Ordering early will help guard against a short supply, which has been an issue in the past.

PEST CONTROL

•Identify and eliminate prime breeding areas for mosquitoes on farms and sites near where horses are housed, such as container, old tires and gutters.

•Change water in troughs at least once weekly, more often if possible.

•Identify and drain areas of standing water or sewage. Repair broken tiles or drainage pipes as these areas frequently contain high numbers of mosquito larvae.

•Use adulticides and insect growth regulators according to label on horses and in standing water as needed to control pests.

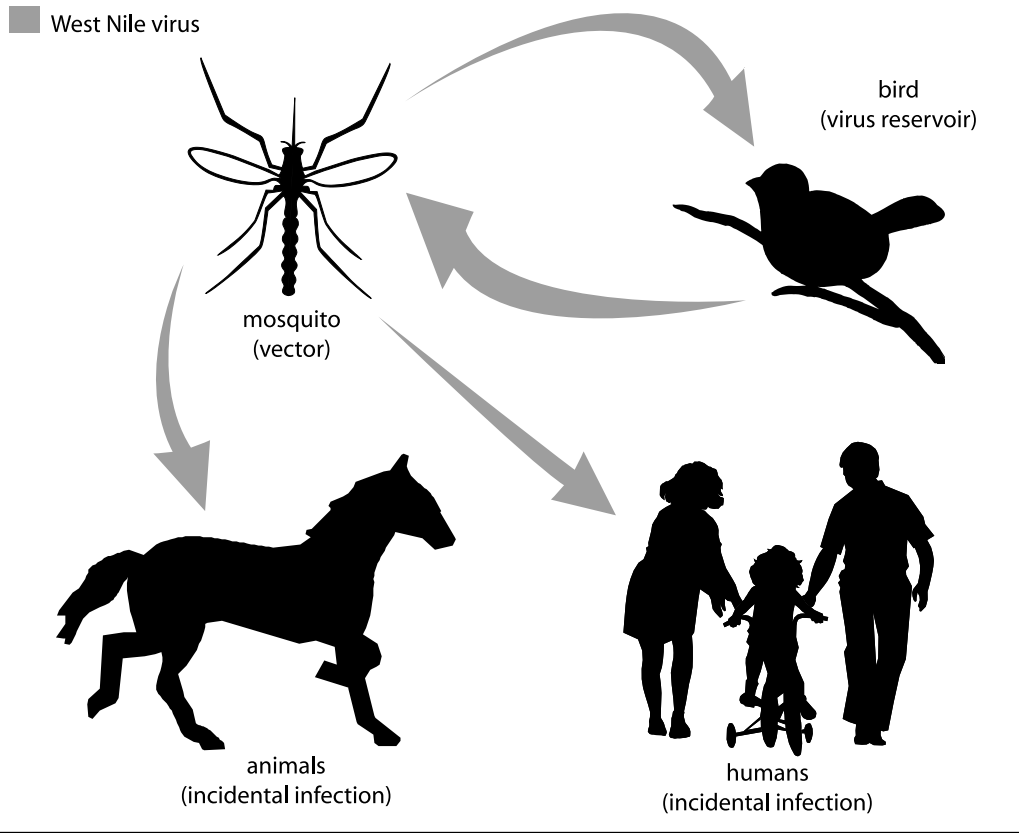
•Use screening on windows and doors. Bring horses inside at night, if possible. Mosquito feeding is the highest at dawn and dusk.

CLINICAL SIGNS

The following symptoms should not be ignored, and warrant a veterinary examination:

- Weakness
- Stumbling
- Incoordination
- Inability to stand/rise
- Tremors, particularly in the lips
- Toe-dragging
- Rapid deterioration, followed by death
- Fever may occur

West Nile Virus Transmission Cycle



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