

2.6 Million Horses Are Vaccinated

Nearly half of the states participating in the federally-funded program to vaccinate horses against Venezuelan Equine Encephalomyelitis (VEE) report treating more than 90 per cent of their horse populations, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced last week.

Scientists say almost all horses in a given area should be vaccinated to assure against continuing spread of this disease. Priority is being given to completing the vaccination of horses by November 1 in states where weather conditions, geography and insect populations combine to place horses in the greatest disease risk from VEE.

Dr Francis J Mulhern, Associate Administrator of USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) said, "We are encouraged by the accumulating evidence on safety of the VEE vaccine. Over 2.6 million horses

have been vaccinated in most cases without regard to age or sex, and no significant adverse reactions have been noted. We can report similar favorable observations on over 2,000 vaccinated horses closely studied by ARS scientists at two sites in Texas."

Eight states with better than 90 per cent of their horses vaccinated by October 1 were: Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oklahoma and Texas.

Other States with from 50 to nearly 90 per cent of their horses vaccinated are: Arizona, California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Maryland, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee and Virginia.

Of the 3.5 million horses in the 19 states nearly 80 per cent had been vaccinated by October 1.

Federal quarantines for VEE remain in effect in Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. Horses in these states may be moved interstate 14 days after vaccination, if they are properly identified and their vaccination records accompany them.

The VEE outbreak has been confined, thus far, to 19 counties in south Texas.

VEE is seasonal in areas where winters are cold enough to kill mosquitoes. Where mosquitoes are found throughout the year, there is no seasonal limit.

Commercial VEE vaccine is now available in states outside of the high-risk areas. Interested horse owners should consult their veterinarians.

VEE closely resembles the Western (WEE) and Eastern (EEE) forms of equine encephalomyelitis, both of which have been in this country for a long time. The type of virus can be determined only by laboratory analysis.

Unlike WEE and EEE, VEE causes extremely high viremia (virus manufacture) in horses so that any mosquito biting them is sure to pick up the infection. It is primarily mosquitoes that spread the disease from horse to horse and to man.

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